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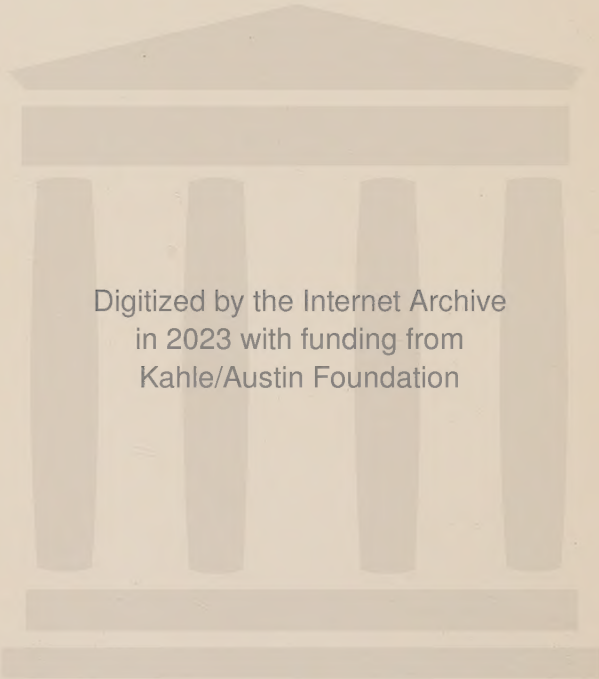




☆A. F. CONNAUGHTON☆

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*Susan Wood*



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THE  
SECOND COMING OF THE LORD:

ITS CAUSE, SIGNS, AND EFFECTS.

BY  
REV. CHAUNCEY GILES,  
AUTHOR OF "MAN AS A SPIRITUAL BEING," "THE INCARNATION AND  
ATONEMENT," "HEAVENLY BLESSEDNESS," ETC.

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"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."—John xiv. 18.

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## PREFACE.

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THE Lectures which compose this volume have been published at the request of many persons who heard them. It was thought by those in whose judgment the author has much confidence that they throw some light upon the subject to which they relate, and which is exciting great interest in the Christian world at the present time ; but no more than its intrinsic importance demands.

An attempt has been made to show that the principles formulated in the doctrines of the New Church, and contained in the writings of Swedenborg, give us a rational and practical solution of the Second Coming, which is in entire accordance with the whole of Scripture, correctly understood ; with the purposes of the Lord in the creation of man, so far as they can be known from reason and Revelation ; and with the nature of man and of his relations to the Source of his life, and the conditions on which alone he can work out his destiny.

There is no difficulty in stating these doctrines. They are as distinctly enunciated as are the principles of natural truth in the most rigidly scientific treatise. But they are so remote from common opinion, and the point of view is so different from the one usually taken by those who have written upon the subject, that to

gain a fair hearing it seemed necessary to take some common ground and lead up to a spiritual position from which alone, it is believed, the prophecies concerning it, and the question itself, can be understood. But it is exceedingly difficult to do this. To enter fully into the subject would require volumes. The most that the author has any hope of accomplishing is to give some hints of the new doctrine, and to point out the direction in which we may reasonably look for a clear exposition of it. If the publication of the Lectures give the help to those who may read them which their delivery seemed to promise, or if they encourage those who are waiting for the Second Coming with the hope that the time and manner of it may be understood, they will perform a use sufficient to justify their publication.

As it was the purpose of the author to gain a hearing for principles which were not familiar to many minds, there will be found some repetition of facts and illustrations. They seemed useful in speaking to an audience at intervals of a week or more, and it is hoped that they may help the reader to a clearer knowledge of the subject.

The author has no interest in any theory of the Second Coming, as such. He only desires to know the truth about it, and to watch, as we are commanded to do, that he may recognize and welcome the Lord in whatever guise and manner He may come. Believing most heartily that He is coming in the power and glory of spiritual truth, to institute a New Age in which all the promises of prophecy and the purposes of infinite love will be carried into effect, he desires to give to others, as far as possible, the grounds of his belief and the joy of his hope.



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# THE SECOND COMING OF THE LORD.

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## LECTURE I.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT, AND THE MEANS  
ESSENTIAL TO ITS SOLUTION.

“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”—  
John xiv. 18.

WHEN our Lord declared to His disciples that He was about to leave their outward presence and close His personal intercourse with them in this world, their hearts were filled with sorrow. They had cherished the hope that He would remain on the earth, become king of the Jews, redeem them from the hand of their enemies, and exalt their nation to universal dominion. From their association with Him they knew He possessed every quality for such a mission. He had wrought the most stupendous miracles in their presence; He had shown that He was endowed with superhuman power; He could control the elements, quell the fury of the storm by a word, cast out devils, and multiply a few loaves and fishes to food sufficient to feed thousands of hungry people. He could cure diseases which had



baffled the skill of the wisest physicians; He could give sight to those who were born blind, and even raise the dead. He possessed a penetrating sagacity, which could read the secret motives and inmost thoughts of men, as an open book. He was gifted with a wisdom beyond all human capacity to instruct, guide, and govern men.

What magnificent qualities for a ruler! Under the reign of such a king what heights of power and glory might not their nation attain! No obstacles could hinder His progress in the attainment of His purposes, no enemy could withstand His power, no artifice could escape Him, no skill could outreach Him. There was no man and no power which could prevent Him from raising the Jewish nation to the dominion and glory foretold by the prophets.

But now this magnificent hope, so near realization, is blasted. Their King and Lord abandons His mission, gives up His power, and is about to leave them helpless, fatherless, forsaken. His departure destroys all their visions of freedom from a hated foreign yoke, blasts all their hopes of personal power and of dominion over the nations; it sends them back to their nets and to their obscurity.

The announcement that He was going to prepare a place for them in His Father's house gave them but little comfort. Their minds were clouded with natural ideas; they were slow to apprehend spiritual truths. Where is the Father's house? Who is the Father? Show Him to us and we will be content. Giving up this grand hope of an earthly kingdom,

and going away into some spiritual realm, seemed to them, as it always seems to the natural mind, to be giving up a substantial and real possession for an abstract and fanciful one. They had no conception of spirit as a substantial entity; they had no idea of a spiritual kingdom larger than the material universe, and surpassing it in power, glory, and in every means of progress in knowledge and happiness, farther than man himself surpasses the grass in his path. They could not understand why it was best for them that He should go away. They could not see, and the Church, to this day, has not understood how He could do more for them by going away from their outward presence than He could by remaining with them. They did not understand what was meant by going to the Father, and, therefore, they did not know that by going away from natural and personal association with them, He could assume a position from which He could come to them with greater power. They did not fully comprehend what He meant when He said, "If I go, I come,"—that is, by the very act of going away from the outward world I come with greater and fuller consciousness to the inward spiritual life.

But they seized upon the promise that He would come again. The fact of His coming they could understand, if they did not fully comprehend the manner of it. This fact was their comfort, and it has been the comfort and hope of the Church in every age since the promise was made. The apostles expected it in their day. They constantly refer

to it in their preaching, and in their letters to the Churches. They present it in its most terrible aspects, as a restraint from wickedness; they picture in vivid colors the glories and blessings which will attend it, as motives for patience in hardship and suffering, for fidelity in duty, and as a most powerful incentive to a holy life. Their method of using the Lord's Second Coming as a motive to a good life may be summed up in the words of Peter, "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless."

Since the apostles' time men have been restrained from sin by the same fears, and encouraged in the weary warfare against evil in their own hearts and in the world, by the same hope. When good men have seen the prevalence of error, when they have felt, with keen and painful consciousness, how strongly sin was entrenched in their own natures, had become organized into institutions and civil governments, and crystallized into private and public habits, they have despaired of the power of truth to withstand the tide of error, and to break up the organized forms of iniquity. When they have been discouraged by the slow progress which heavenly principles have made in taking root in the heart, purifying the affections and controlling the actions of men, they have abandoned all hope of success in building up the Lord's kingdom upon the earth by the ordinary means of teaching truth and influencing the life, and they have looked for a



second personal advent, and the exercise of personal power, as the only hope of humanity.

The Second Coming is, therefore, still a living subject. In the re-awakening of human interest in all questions concerning man's nature, and the means by which he is to work out his destiny, so important a subject as the coming of the Lord again to the earth could not fail of exciting profound interest. Consequently, we find that it has received more attention during the last half-century than ever before. Every year shows an increase of interest in it. By common consent we are now in the last times, and human ingenuity and wisdom have been exhausted to wrest from prophecy the secret of the time and manner of the Lord's Coming.

But the subject has never awakened more interest than its intrinsic importance demands. If the Lord is to come again in any sense worthy of the name, there must be profound and urgent reasons for it, in the needs and conditions of men. There must be a crisis in human affairs which the Church by any means in her power cannot avert, and which demands a more direct interference by the Lord to save man from the impending ruin. Or, as some believe, it shows that the Lord Himself despairs of accomplishing His purposes in the creation of man, and that He is coming to put an end to the work, or, abandoning the old plans, to begin anew with wiser methods and greater power. It is not, therefore, an isolated act in the Lord's providential

work. It reaches before and after. It involves every doctrine concerning the nature of the Lord, His purposes and methods of action, and His relations to man. It is intimately connected with the doctrines of the Trinity, the atonement, and especially with the resurrection and the future condition of the good and the wicked. It has a most important bearing upon the fact and nature of the inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures. The continuance of the material universe, and indeed every human hope and interest is involved in the question. It is not surprising, therefore, that it has engaged the profoundest attention of theologians in all ages, and that it is discussed with increasing interest at the present time. It is worthy of the most candid and patient consideration. Our Lord commands us to watch for His coming; and this we must do, not by looking up into the air, but by using our best wisdom to understand the nature, and our sharpest insight to discern the signs and methods of His coming.

There are good reasons for a more thorough investigation of the subject, and for considering it from a new point of view. The wide difference of opinion which has always prevailed among theologians upon the time and manner of the Second Coming is conclusive evidence that the question is not yet settled, and cannot be by the methods of reasoning and interpreting the Scriptures which have been generally employed. Theologians do not agree about the meaning of the dates which

they suppose fix the time of the Advent. They are equally uncertain about the import of the signs which are to precede and accompany, and the effects which will follow it. Some think the Lord is coming in person in the material clouds; others do not. Some think the material universe is to be burned up and annihilated; others, that there are no sufficient grounds for such a belief. Some teach that the Lord will come and reign a thousand years before the judgment and the final consummation of all material things, while others advocate the doctrine that the resurrection and final judgment will take place immediately upon the Lord's coming, and that the millennium will succeed it. Some hold that all the Jews will return to Jerusalem, and that the Lord will establish His seat of government there, and that the Jews will become His most intelligent and devoted followers, while others regard the idea as absurd. In general, it will be found that the more the advocates of any theory have descended into particulars, the more incoherent and contradictory have been the results. There is only one point on which all Christians agree,—that is, the fact that the Lord will come again according to His promise.

This failure to reach any satisfactory result has not been due to any want of honesty or learning by those who have investigated the subject. Many of them were good men, who had a due appreciation of the great importance of the question, and who sincerely desired to know the truth about it.

They also brought great learning and industry and intellectual acumen to its investigation. But they did not succeed in solving the problem, and they have pretty clearly demonstrated that it cannot be solved by the old methods of reasoning and interpreting the Scriptures.

It is evident, therefore, that the question must be regarded from a new and entirely different point of view. Some method of interpreting the Scriptures must be employed which is of universal application; which will show that the wildest visions of the prophets and the plainest precepts of life; the beauty of song and the dry facts of history, give their consenting voice to this grand event, and plainly disclose the cause of it, the form of it, and the effects which must result from it.

The question must also be regarded from a true knowledge of the Divine character and the purpose of the Lord in the creation of man. Any mistake upon this point will enter into every step of our examination of evidence, will color all our reasoning, and bias all our conclusions. If the Lord created human beings to make an exhibition of His power, to have a universe of servants to be the subjects of His will and the echoes of His praise, then He must be disappointed in His hopes. They have rebelled against Him; they refuse to give Him praise and glory. The experiment has failed, and He must come to put an end to it, and give up His original purpose, or try again. If He is a Being of infinite love and wisdom, creating human beings from

the sole desire of communicating His own life and blessedness to them, then He must have seen every phase and step in the unfolding of His purpose from the beginning, and He must be coming in the wisest manner to carry it into more complete effect.

It is not impossible to discover, in a general way, what purpose must be the controlling one in all the Lord's works, because we know something of the nature of love and wisdom. All His ends must be such as infinite love would suggest, and they must be carried into effect by infinitely wise means. There cannot, therefore, be any mistake, or any trying of experiments, or any retracting of His steps.

Another question which will enter largely into this subject and have a most important bearing upon the conclusions at which we arrive, is the inherent and essential relations of the Lord to man. Much of the difficulty which men have found in understanding this subject, and many of the false conclusions resulting from their reasonings, have originated in mistaken ideas of the essential relations which exist between man and the Lord. It has, seemingly, been taken for granted that these relations are of the same nature as those which exist between a sovereign ruler and his subjects. But this is a great mistake. There may be this relation, but it is not the essential one. The real one is far more intimate. It is the relation of the giver to the receiver of life. It is not merely regulative, governmental, and external; it is inherent,



essential, vital. The Lord is life itself; man is only a recipient of life, and for the preservation of his existence even,—much more for the development of his spiritual faculties,—it is necessary that life should be constantly given and constantly received. There can be no break or intermission in the flow of its current without the loss of our existence. A true knowledge of this relation will modify all our ideas about the form and manner of the Lord's coming, and have the most important bearing upon all our conclusions concerning it.

Enough has been said to show the necessity for gaining a true point of view, and for having true principles to guide us in the discussion of the subject, if we hope to come to any just and satisfactory conclusions. It is sufficient for our present purpose to make this brief statement of the causes of so many failures, and the conditions essential to the solution and comprehension of this problem, which is vitally connected with the perpetuity and happiness of our race.

But it is of little use to expose the mistakes and failures of others unless we have something better to offer in their place. One nail may drive out another without any gain in strength. One theory may give place to another which is no better than itself. This is not progress.

The New Church has new and clearly-defined doctrines with regard to the Second Coming which present the whole subject in an entirely new light, and from a new point of view. These doctrines have

their origin in universal principles, and are evolved from them in a strictly logical manner. They are a statement of the laws of the Divine order as they have been revealed in the Sacred Scriptures, and of the inherent and essential relations which exist between the Lord and man. They fully disclose the nature of the First Advent, the necessity for it, the work accomplished by it, and the reasons why a Second Advent was necessary, how it takes place, and what it will do in working out the full redemption of man and the universal and permanent establishment of the Lord's kingdom upon the earth.

The subject involves the profoundest problems of human life, and I cannot hope to give a full exposition of it in a few lectures. The most that I can reasonably expect to accomplish, is to give some general idea of the doctrines and principles of the New Church, and, I trust, some stimulus to their study, and some help in understanding them.

It will aid us in reaching these results to state as clearly as possible, in the outset, the doctrines of the New Church concerning the Second Coming. We shall then have before us distinct propositions to prove and elucidate, and this will enable us the more easily and surely to determine the force of the testimony adduced in their favor, and to appreciate the logical value of the arguments employed to prove them. I ask your attention, therefore, to a concise statement of these doctrines, which will be more fully set forth in subsequent lectures.

1. The Second Coming of the Lord is not a per-

sonal advent into the material world, and manifestation to the natural senses of men. The First Coming was made in this way, and there is no necessity for its repetition. The Lord never repeats Himself. In the First Coming the Lord revealed Himself to men in their lowest states, to their senses. This was necessary to human salvation. As men were spiritually blind, deaf, and even dead, the Lord communicated His truth and life to them in natural forms, the only way they could receive them. He gave them new commandments and brought Himself into such relations to men that He could communicate a new and a higher degree of life to them. He raised them up into a new light, gave them new thoughts concerning Himself and all spiritual things. He brought a new Divine force to bear upon their affections, and quickened them with a new life. The heart of humanity beat with a more vigorous pulse, and a new step was taken in spiritual progress. In this way He made preparation for His spiritual coming. He gave men the truths which could only be given in an outward way, that He might use them as the means of coming again in the power and glory of the Spirit, to enlighten the understandings and to open the hearts to a much larger and higher reception of His life. He said many things unto His disciples, and through them to the Church, which they did not fully comprehend, and which the Church has never fully understood, because it has not been in a state to comprehend them. But He did it that He might

come again as "the Spirit of Truth," and bring all things to remembrance which He had said unto them, and show them by their own blessed experience that the words He had spoken unto them were "spirit and life."

2. But great as the step was from Judaism to Christianity, it was not a final step. Good and important in itself, it was only a preparation for a much greater one. He had many things to say to men, but they could not bear them; they were not in a state to receive them then. But when He came as "the Spirit of Truth," He would guide them into all truth. The Second Coming is, therefore, to be a spiritual one; it is a coming of the Lord to the understanding and to the reason with a clearer light, and to the will and the affections with a fuller and purer love. In His second and higher entrance into human consciousness "He will guide men into all truth." He will not only give men more light, but He will give them light in a higher degree. He will come to a higher plane of the mind. Before, He came to the senses, and gave men such dim knowledge of Himself and of spiritual truth as He could communicate to the natural mind. Now He is coming in a spiritual form to the spiritual mind, to those faculties in man's nature by which he apprehends truth in higher forms. By these aids man will take a new and distinct step in spiritual progress. He will rise to a higher plane of spiritual knowledge than could be attained by the means and influences of

His First Advent, and come into a corresponding breadth and fulness of spiritual joy and peace.

These new truths are primarily and specifically related to man's highest interests. They are fundamental to all just conceptions of the Divine character, and to a rational knowledge of that crisis in the spiritual condition of humanity, which rendered a Second Coming necessary to the continuance of human life upon the earth, and to the establishment of the Lord's Kingdom here according to His purpose and promise. When these truths are fully comprehended, it will be seen that their communication to man is an act worthy of the name of a Second Coming. It is sufficient for my present purpose to state the following points on which new light will be given.

1. The Lord will come to man in a clearer and higher knowledge of Himself, "whom to know aright is life everlasting." The Church has never had a clear, rational, and satisfactory knowledge of the Lord. There have been doubts and confusion and dimness in the conceptions of the best and largest minds about the personality and nature of God, and of His relations to men. At His Second Coming He will give us a clear and rational knowledge of the trinity, and of its unity in the person of Jesus Christ. He will reveal to us His purpose in the creation of man and the methods of carrying that purpose into effect.

2. He will come to us in a true and adequate knowledge of ourselves. Man has never known

much of the higher degrees of his nature. There are a very few, even among Christians, who have a clear idea that man has a spiritual nature distinct from the natural. To the great mass of human beings spirit stands for but little more than an abstraction, a vital force, or a formless essence. Spiritual truth will give us a knowledge of spirit. It will reveal to us its form, nature, modes of action, its relations to the Lord, and the means and methods of its development. It will disperse the clouds of sense, and raise man into a new and higher world of light; it will disclose to him faculties of his own nature of whose existence he had no knowledge, and of whose capacities for the reception of truth and the enjoyment of peace and blessedness he had no conception. The Lord will come to man in a higher region of the mind than at His First Coming, and will establish His kingdom there, and prepare a place where we can be with Him where He is, and behold His glory.

3. He will come to us in a clear and satisfactory knowledge of the spiritual world. The same ignorance has prevailed about the spiritual world as about the spirit of man. To nearly all men, Christian as well as heathen, it is an unknown world. Men's conceptions of it are dim, shadowy, confused, and contradictory. The most that is said about it is conjecture. Being a spiritual realm, it can only be revealed in spiritual light. This light will be given at the Second Coming, so full and clear that all doubts about the substantial existence



of this new world which is the home of all who have been born upon the earth and have passed on, and which is to be the final home of all human beings, will be dispelled; its nature and relations to the material world will be clearly understood, and the activities, modes of life, means of progress, and the causes of the joy and sorrow of its inhabitants, will be fully revealed. It is one of the great objects of the Second Coming to give man a clear, true, and rational knowledge of this world which is to be his home forever.

4. Another important effect of the Second Coming will be the revealing to man the true nature of the Sacred Scriptures. While theoretically regarded by Christians as the Word of God, they have been practically interpreted as the word of man. The most contradictory doctrines have been drawn from them. Given to reveal spiritual truth, they have been interpreted as though they related to natural things. Symbols have been mistaken for the truths they were employed to reveal, and religious doctrines have been drawn from "the letter which killeth," rather than from "the spirit which maketh alive." From this earthly point of view, a large part of the Bible has no spiritual significance, or only a very remote and inferential one. Some parts seem to be in conflict with well-established facts of science; and in many places we find such wild imagery, and such a mixture of symbol and what seems to be plain and natural fact, that no human wisdom has proved sufficient to disentangle

them, and deduce from the whole a clear knowledge of either spiritual or natural truth. The Scriptures have always been a cloud through whose obscuring folds the sun of spiritual truth has never shone with clear and steady light. The Lord is coming in these clouds, that through them and by means of them He may reveal Himself to man in all the power and glory of spiritual truth. He will carry on the work which He began on His way to Emmaus with a few of His disciples; He will reveal to all His disciples "the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures." He will give a perfect key that will open all their natural doors, and admit us to their genuine spiritual meaning; He will call all things to our remembrance which He has said to us in His Word, and show us their true import.

5. By these means man will be introduced into a world of new truth. He will gain new and satisfactory knowledge upon all questions relating to his spiritual nature and destiny. He will understand the great problem of salvation; he will see what the Lord effected by His first coming, and why it was necessary for Him to clothe His Divine with a human nature; what was the cause of His suffering, and why it was expedient for us that He should die,—should go away,—that He might come again in the power and glory of the Spirit.

6. It will throw a flood of light upon man's resurrection,—show us what it really is, and how effected. It will reveal to us what we are to understand by the End of the World, the Judgment, and the nature of

the new Heavens and the new Earth. When the Lord comes as the "Spirit of truth, He will guide us into all truth" upon all the great questions of our spiritual life and death, of our nature and destiny. By His coming in spiritual power to man's spiritual mind, He will open new faculties in his nature, He will raise him into a new state of life, and by so doing He will introduce him into a new world, give him a consciousness of new joys, place him in conditions to take a new step in spiritual progress, and, in a word, "make all things new."

Such is a very brief statement of what the doctrines of the New Church teach us concerning the nature and effects of the Lord's Second Coming. It will be my purpose, in subsequent lectures, to unfold these subjects more fully, and to show that they are not only in accordance with, but are actually drawn from, the whole of Scripture; that they are in harmony with what must be all the purposes of infinite love and wisdom, and eminently worthy of an infinite and benevolent Creator; that they are the fulfilment of all prophecy, commend themselves to enlightened human reason, and reconcile man to God and the ways of God to man.

## LECTURE II.

### THE TESTIMONY OF SACRED SCRIPTURE.

“Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.”—Luke xxiv. 25.

THE Sacred Scriptures are the primary source of all our knowledge concerning the Second Coming of the Lord. In them He has revealed the fact and the manner in which this great event will take place. It is, therefore, of essential importance to a true knowledge of the subject that we should understand what their real teaching is. It is generally acknowledged by all honest minds that many and great difficulties lie in the way of gaining this accurate knowledge, and of learning distinctly and truly what the Lord has revealed to men about it. The language in which the manner of His coming is predicted is so vague, the signs which will precede and attest it, and the results which will be effected by it, are described in imagery so bold and extravagant, that it has been found impossible to get from them a satisfactory knowledge of the subject. Theologians are in doubt about the meaning of the signs and the events which are to precede and follow it, and even about the nature of the coming itself. They have not been able to decide whether the signs are literal or figurative, and they have

found it impossible to disentangle the natural from the spiritual. They have been unable to discover the precise natural events referred to as the signs which are to precede and foreshadow His coming. There are wars and rumors of wars in all ages, earthquakes are not of uncommon occurrence, false prophets are constantly arising and deceiving many, iniquity always abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. How, then, can we determine which are the specific events which, as stars, must guide our judgment to a just conclusion? The inevitable result of this confusion of ideas is indefiniteness, variety, and even opposition of opinion.

As there is such a diversity of opinion about the facts which are the data for all our doctrines and reasonings upon this subject, it is hardly possible to arrive at true and rational conclusions without some new light upon them. If we mistake natural symbol for spiritual fact, and the appearances of truth for the truths themselves, we must inevitably come to false conclusions. In every investigation of the subject our first effort, therefore, should be to understand the Scriptures,—to learn what they do really teach in their whole scope and spirit. If we succeed in doing this, we shall know for a certainty when and in what manner the Lord is coming. He has commanded us to watch for it, and there is no other way of genuine watching than using our best powers to gain the knowledge necessary to understand the signs which He has given us.

There are two methods of interpreting the language of the Sacred Scriptures, a natural and a spiritual method. They differ from one another as widely as the two methods of interpreting the facts of nature, which are the sensuous and the scientific. According to the sensuous method, the report of the senses is accepted as the genuine truth upon which we are to base our judgment and form our theories of the universe. The scientist looks to the inherent qualities of substances, and to their essential relations to one another, and regards the knowledge of them as the only data by which true principles can be established. By the former method we are constantly subject to the illusion of appearances; by the latter, we see them in their real and permanent order; and we can trust them to the uttermost. The results reached by these two methods differ as widely as the methods themselves. The miraculous changes which have been wrought in the material world by the aid of scientific knowledge have clearly demonstrated its immense superiority over sensuous knowledge, in the service it can render to every human use.

According to the principles of the natural method, the Scriptures are written like any book of merely human composition, and they are to be interpreted by grammar and lexicon, according to the natural laws of language. As a rule, the literal, obvious, natural meaning is the true one. The truth revealed is bounded by the horizon of time and space. Spiritual truth is brought within the domain of



nature, takes on the forms of nature, becomes natural, and the literal meaning of the words is to be taken as the measure of the spiritual meaning. Material facts and historical events are stated for the value of the facts themselves, to teach the truths they naturally convey, and to serve as data for such moral conclusions as the reader can draw from them. They have no meaning in the Bible which they would not have if used in any other book.

This principle of interpretation may be seen more clearly by examples than by abstract statement. According to it the words earth and heavens mean the same they do to the scientist. The creation of the heavens and the earth refers only to the creation of the material universe. Speech means merely vocal utterance when it refers to God, the same as it does when it refers to man. Prophecy foretells natural events or spiritual events which are to take place in the material world, and therefore under material conditions, and we must look to them for its fulfilment. Coming and going, when spoken of the Lord or of spiritual beings, mean the same as when applied to men and animals, and they mean no more than a passage from one place to another. Death is the dissolution of the material body, and resurrection its reorganization and the return of the soul to give it life. And, generally, the scope and form of the meaning of the Scriptures are natural, and subject to the laws of time and space.

It is true there are many passages in them which

cannot be so interpreted as all will admit. The natural meaning is sometimes contrary to all our ideas of what is proper and useful, and to the teachings of the Scriptures themselves in many other places. For example: they say we cannot be the disciples of the Lord without hating father and mother. They command us to pluck out the right eye, to cut off the right hand, to sell all we have and give to the poor, and even to let the dead bury the dead, while we follow the Lord. It is true, also, that the words are sometimes winged and rise from the earth into the realms of the spirit; but their wings are soon clipped, and they are kept as near the earth as possible. Spirit is brought into the domain of nature, and weighted and measured by it. If the language is sometimes transparent and a spiritual light shines through it, revealing heavenly forms, it is regarded as exceptional, and untrustworthy as a basis for doctrine. The only safe course consists in sticking to the letter. Spiritual truth as it appears in the natural forms of the letter is regarded as the genuine truth, from which our ideas of spirit are to be formed and our doctrines of religion are to be drawn.

The spiritual method reverses this order and process. According to this method, the spiritual meaning is the real one. The letter must be interpreted by the spirit. While the natural facts and historical events may have actually occurred, still they are not given primarily to teach natural truth, but to be a vehicle of communicating spir-

itual truth. Natural ideas bear the same relation to spiritual ideas that material words and natural sounds and actions bear to spiritual ideas. The spiritual realm is above nature, as the spirit of man is above his body. It is governed by different laws, and when any natural actions or qualities are attributed to it, they must be understood in a sense applicable to spiritual subjects. For example: when we apply the terms sweet, sour, large, small, high, low, bright, dark, or motion of any kind to the spirit, we must understand them in a sense applicable to spirit and not to nature. According to the same law, the Sacred Scriptures, which were given to reveal spiritual and Divine truth, must be understood in a sense applicable to spiritual and Divine things.

When natural actions and qualities are attributed to the Lord, they must be understood in a sense applicable to His nature. The coming and going of Him who is omnipresent, cannot be like that of a man who travels through space. If the Lord has made a revelation of His nature and attributes and relations to men by means of natural actions and events, those actions and events must be understood according to the spiritual and Divine ideas embodied in them; they cannot be limited to the natural meaning without destroying their character as a revelation of spiritual and Divine truth.

This principle may be seen more clearly, perhaps, by taking the same examples already used in illustrating the natural method of interpretation. There

are spiritual as well as material heavens and earths, and it is the Lord's primary purpose to create the spiritual, and to reveal to man how it is done, by telling him how the material earth and heavens were made. The account means more than the scientist imagines, and only so much is given as is essential to the purpose. The speech of God is something more than vocal utterance. It must mean those Divine activities which bear the same relation to speech that man's ideas do to his words. Prophecy refers primarily to spiritual events, which can only take place in the spiritual world, and, therefore, cannot be measured by time and space, and no natural event could be its fulfilment. Coming and going, when attributed to the Lord, cannot mean passage through space; it cannot be a change in the immutable, but alterations of state in man, by which he comes into harmony or opposition to the Divine forces. Time and space have nothing to do with spiritual proximity or remoteness. The essential meaning of death must be the death of the soul, and resurrection must be a change in the soul from spiritual death to spiritual life.

According to this method of interpretation, the Sacred Scriptures are regarded from a spiritual point of view. The natural is given for the spiritual. From this point of view there are no contradictions, and no unmeaning phrases. Every word is winged with spiritual forces, and rises into the realms of the spirit. Every fact, however dry and material it may be, is an Aaron's rod which blossoms

with spiritual truth. Through the cloud of the letter the sun of spiritual truth shines with clear and steady radiance, revealing new heavens and new earths, and new capacities in our own natures, for the reception of life from the Lord. It shows us the methods and laws by which the Lord can prepare a place for us in the mansions of the Father's house, and can come to us and take us unto Himself, that where He is we may be also. I propose to use both the natural and the spiritual methods in the interpretation of those parts of Scripture which relate to the Second Coming. In this way we can see which is the most rational, which accords the most fully with the whole of Scripture, which reveals the Divine character in the clearest and most attractive light, and which leads to results the most worthy of infinite love and wisdom and omnipotent power.

The fairest and most effective way of testing the results of the natural method will be to examine the prophecies of the First Coming and their fulfilment. Here the circuit is complete. We have the prophecies and their fulfilment before us, and we can easily compare them, and judge for ourselves whether a natural interpretation will yield the well-established results.

In doing this we must endeavor to put ourselves in the spiritual point of view of the Jews to whom the prophecies were given. We must take the prophecies for what they could mean, and only for what they could mean, to the people to whom they were given. We must interpret them literally. It

will not do to import our knowledge into them,—a knowledge gained by many generations of experience and study in the light of events long since passed. Prophecy cannot be fully understood until it is fulfilled.

It is impossible to give a full exposition of the subject within the limits of a lecture. I can only consider some of the most prominent points. These, however, will be sufficient to establish the principle, and to show how important is its bearing upon the whole subject.

1. The prophecies clearly declare that the Lord would come as King of Israel. In Jeremiah (xxiii. 5, 6) it is said: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, ‘the Lord our righteousness.’” The same prophet, in the 33d chapter from the fifteenth verse to the end, declares: “David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel;” that He had made a covenant with David which could not be broken, that he should never fail to have a son to reign upon his throne, and that He would multiply his seed until, like the hosts of heaven and the sand of the sea, they could not be numbered. It is promised as clearly as language can express an idea, that David, through the royal line of his descendants who were to culminate in the



Messiah, was to reign forever. The prophet Eze-  
kiel, after declaring that Joseph and Ephraim should  
be united into one nation and that one king should  
rule over them, says (xxxvii. 24, 25), "And David  
my servant shall be king over them; and they all  
shall have one Shepherd: they shall also walk in my  
judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.  
And they shall dwell in the land that I have given  
unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have  
dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and  
their children, and their children's children forever:  
and my servant David shall be their prince forever."  
In Psalm lxxxix. 3, 4, it is written, "I have made a  
covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David  
my servant: Thy seed will I establish forever, and  
build up thy throne to all generations." The Lord  
is often called the King of Israel before He came  
into the world, and sometimes after He came. His  
entry into Jerusalem as the King of Israel was  
clearly foretold. The wise men from the east came  
to worship Him who was "born King of the Jews."  
Nathaniel said, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God,  
thou art the King of Israel." But it is not neces-  
sary to multiply testimony to a fact which is gener-  
ally acknowledged. The Sacred Scriptures une-  
quivocally declare that Jehovah, who was to come  
into the world as the Lord Jesus Christ, was to  
come as the King of the Jews, the King of Israel.  
The Jews expected Him to come as their king, with  
the power and glory foretold by the prophets.

The conception of a king in the minds of the

Jews was a purely natural one. They had no idea that the word could mean anything more than a civil ruler. The history of their own nation supplied them with conspicuous examples, in the persons of David and Solomon, of the quality of kings, and what they could do for a people. It did not shake their confidence in the promises contained in their Sacred Writings, that there were some things connected with those promises which would be difficult if not impossible of fulfilment. They looked at the main subject. It did not awaken any doubts in their minds of the possibility of a literal execution of the prophecies, because they were so grand and comprehensive. That was fully in accord with their ways of thinking.

They expected a king who would establish his throne at Jerusalem on an imperishable basis, with a splendor more glorious than Solomon's, and a power greater than David's. Their hearts warmed with an inward delight at the thought of the vengeance He would take upon their adversaries, and swelled with joy at the visions of universal dominion promised their nation. Even the disciples believed the Lord was to be a civil ruler, and they were looking forward with bright hopes of occupying high places in His kingdom, when He should take the reins of power in His own hand. They even disputed with one another about the positions they hoped to occupy. By redemption they understood release from the galling servitude of a foreign yoke. The enemies from whose hand they hoped for de-

liverance were the Romans and the other nations who had conquered and made them captive. They had no idea of any invisible and more terrible foes to whom they were subject. Their thoughts and affections did not pass beyond the horizon of this natural life.

This is evident from their terrible disappointment when they were told by the Lord that He was to be crucified; by their desertion of Him in His hour of trial, their disbelief in His resurrection, and their return to their humble employments when they supposed that His mission had failed. They told the whole story of their disappointment when they said to the apparent stranger who joined them on their way to Emmaus, "We trusted it had been He who was to redeem Israel." The Lord recognized and rebuked this purely natural state of their understanding when He replied, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Would He not have just occasion to administer the same rebuke to many who claim to be His disciples and the expositors of what the prophets and He Himself have foretold concerning His Second Coming, for the pure naturalism of their interpretation?

2. The prophecies concerning Jerusalem and the Jewish people also give ample testimony to the fact that they cannot be naturally interpreted. The most remarkable statements are made concerning the beauty and power and glory and perpetuity of that celebrated city. The Lord declares by the

mouth of His prophets that "He will rejoice in Jerusalem;" that "it shall be a crown of glory in the hand of Jehovah, and a royal diadem in the hand of God;" that "it shall be a city of holiness, and the unclean shall no more come into her;" that "the King of Israel is in the midst of her;" that "Jerusalem shall be the throne of Jehovah, and all nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem." Even the glories of nature are to be eclipsed when the Lord takes up His abode in her. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously" (Isaiah xxiv. 23). I might take up many other points in the prophecies concerning the First Advent, to the same import, which were never literally, and which cannot be literally accomplished. But those I have adduced are sufficient for my purpose. Let us look at them in the light of history.

What testimony could be stronger and more direct than that the Messiah was to be King of the Jews, and to set up His glorious throne in Jerusalem? But, in the natural meaning of the word, He never was a king. On the contrary, He held no civil office; He did not perform any civil functions. "He was despised and rejected of men." He did not set up His throne in Jerusalem, from which He issued mandates to the subject nations. His royal palace was the humble dwelling of a carpenter. The grand apartments in which He was

born were a stable, and His bed of down, a manger. He was poorer than the beasts. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." His imperial retinue was a few illiterate fishermen, and men from the humblest walks of life, who wandered with Him from village to village; His sceptre was a reed, His diadem a crown of thorns, and His throne a cross.

The people who were to welcome Him as their sovereign, and to become the joy and rejoicing of His heart, never admitted His claims. They denied His descent from the royal line of David; they despised and rejected Him and His doctrines; they ridiculed His pretensions, accused and condemned Him to death for the rumor that He claimed the office which the prophets had given Him, and with wicked and bloody hands they crucified Him who, according to the plainest predictions, was to reign over them forever.

Jerusalem, the holy city, the joy of the whole earth, the peaceable habitation, the "royal diadem in the hand of God," "the city of holiness," whose glories were to outshine the splendors of the sun, has been the scene of the direst conflicts. Its temple has been destroyed, its inhabitants driven into exile, its streets trodden by the feet of infidels, and the nation which was to be multiplied as the sands of the sea, which was to rule the world, and be enriched by the gold and the service of all peoples, and which was to endure to all generations, has had no country and no home and no existence for eighteen centuries.

It is impossible to conceive of events more remote and diverse from those so clearly predicted. It is not surprising that the Jews could not see in Jesus Christ the glorious King the prophets had described. When viewed in a purely natural light, and judged by the ideas of the people and the knowledge of the age, He did not answer to the predictions concerning Him, except in some minor and apparently unimportant particulars. Tell the Jew of that day that the natural things and acts mentioned were not the ones meant, and he would laugh you to scorn. Did not he know what a king was? Could you persuade him that by Jerusalem is meant some ideal state of society? Tell him that there is a grander temple in every human soul than even Solomon's itself, that there is a realm in every mind wider than Judea, or even the whole world, and a more august throne than David's or Cæsar's, and he would think you had lost your reason. He would say, as the literalists of the present time say with regard to the Second Coming,—We want a real and substantial king, one that is cognizable by the senses; we want the pomp and circumstance of a natural and imperial government; we want to see the king's face, and hear his voice, and to know that his throne has a permanent locality; we want to have his enemies feel the crushing hand of his power, and to see the captive nations come bending the knee to him. And they could say it with as much weight of authority and right of reason.

But we must not leave the subject with only this



reverse side of the picture before us. Let us regard the prophecies concerning the First Coming from a spiritual point of view, and see how the whole aspect is changed; how every jot and tittle of the promise is fulfilled.

He was to come as a king of the royal line of David. He came as the Word,—as Divine truth,—and truth is the universal king. He declared this when He was asked by Pilate, “Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.” By this answer He practically assents to the truth implied in Pilate’s question, and declares that He is king because He is the truth. Truth is king. Where there is any just government it is administered by the truth. Truth acquits, and truth condemns. Truth regulates, guides, controls, and rewards. How wonderfully its dominion has extended over the realms of nature during the last century! Mind is taking the place of instinct, and rational knowledge of sensuous appearances. This vast extension of the sway of mind over matter is but the shadow of the power of Divine truth. This power is quietly but steadily working its way and establishing its kingdom in the minds of men, and it will continue to destroy error and extend its dominion until “all the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and he shall reign forever.”

David also represents the Divine truth, and his

whole history is a bold and true picture of the conflicts of truth with error, of its defeats and victories, its sufferings and labors to establish its kingdom, and its triumphs and songs of victory. The royal line of David can never become extinct, and he can never want a man to sit upon his throne, until Divine truth shall perish and the Lord Himself shall cease to rule. His throne is the essential principles of the Divine order; it has omnipotence for its power, and infinite wisdom for its direction.

From a spiritual point of view, the real, permanent Jerusalem is a spiritual society organized by the principles of Divine truth. The earthly Jerusalem was only a type and shadow of the real one. The Church, which is the true Jerusalem, is the Lord's kingdom on the earth. This kingdom He is in the constant effort to establish. But by Church we must understand something more than a name, or a sect. It is a society governed by heavenly principles, living a heavenly life. So far as any man or any society of men possesses a knowledge of Divine truth, and lives according to it, the Lord is their King, His throne is established in their understandings, and His love in their affections. He dwells in them, and they in Him.

When we rise into the spiritual plane of the creation, we ascend above time and space; we come into the domain of principles, of states of being and life. These principles are as immutable as the source from which they emanate. A human being, a function of office, a nation, a material city, or a

natural object may represent them in one or more of their forms or activities, and then pass away, while the truth remains the same. The Israelites represented the principles of a heavenly society, and their history is employed by the Lord to reveal those principles to men in a form in which every one, even the ignorant, even "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." They were not a heavenly society, but quite the reverse of it. Yet they were of such a nature that they could be made to represent one.

Regarding Jerusalem as the representative of the heavenly principles which constitute the Church on the earth, and the Israelites as representing the people who compose the Church, we can see how every prediction concerning the upbuilding and destruction, the beauty and deformity, the prosperity and adversity, the glory and the shame of the earthly city, has been and is in the process of being literally fulfilled in regard to the Church. All the suffering, shame, and death which have come upon the Church by error and sin, and all the power, life, and blessedness which are the fruits of obedience to the Divine laws, have their earthly symbols and embodiment in the history of that remarkable city.

It is true that God is in the principles which Jerusalem represents. He "sets up His throne" in them; He "dwells" in them. Jerusalem is a "quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords

thereof be broken." This Jerusalem is a "holy city," "the joy of the whole earth," "a royal diadem in the hand of thy God," whose glories were to outshine the sun. It is from this Jerusalem that the law goes forth which is to subdue the nations, and to which all people are to gather and bend the knee and bow the heart in submission. Not one "jot or tittle" of the prophetic promises concerning her can fail of literal and exact fulfilment.

Such is the difference in result between the natural and spiritual methods of interpreting the Word. By the natural method we mistake the appearances of truth for the truth itself. Those who adopt this rule of interpretation are compelled to resort to many shifts and devices to make one part coincide with another; to substitute suppositions for established facts, and even then to spiritualize after their own fashion many things which they cannot dispose of literally. By this practice truths entirely distinct are brought together. Symbol and fact, matter and spirit are unequally yoked together. Spiritual principles, which are universal and eternal, are brought within the limits of time and space, and, as an inevitable consequence, their light is dimmed, the true meaning of the symbol is perverted, and the mind which seeks to understand it is distracted and led into endless perplexities. The history of opinions and doctrines upon all spiritual questions gives abundant testimony to the fact that such are the logical results of abiding in the letter which killeth.

The spiritual method, while more specific and exact, giving no room for any play of fancy to those who follow its laws, deals with principles which are ever the same, under whatever form they may appear, and by whatever symbols they may be expressed. We are led by them into order and harmony. Apparent difficulties vanish, and we come into clearer light and a larger life. "The spirit maketh alive." The temporal points to the eternal; the real shines through the apparent, as the sun through clouds, as the light of science through sensuous appearances. We rise above the obscuring mists of the senses into the serene atmosphere of stable principles, from which we can see the spiritual meaning of the wildest visions of the prophets and the plainest facts of history. By following this light we can hardly fail to come to rational and satisfactory conclusions.

We have now gained position from whose clear heights we can understand the predictions of the Second Coming. We learn from the Word itself, and from the history of events during the last eighteen centuries, that the prophecies concerning the First Advent were not literally fulfilled in their plainest and essential declarations. We have also seen that in the highest and noblest sense, in their application to the spiritual history of men, and in the relations of the Lord as a Divine Being to them, they were fulfilled to the letter. Are we not justified, then, by the Lord Himself in following the same principles, and in using the same methods,

in interpreting the signs and predictions of the Second Coming? Is it not logical, rational, and in accordance with the practice and plainest teaching of our Lord when He was upon the earth, to take the highest rather than the lowest, the spiritual rather than the natural, the universal rather than the local and personal, meaning of the words He uses to convey Divine truth to men? If doubts still remain in the mind of any lover of the Word that this may not be the true method of interpreting its language; if any fears exist that it may tend to dissipate the force and divert the special aim of revelation, we trust that the results, as we proceed in examining the subject, will not only dispel his doubts and quiet his fears, but will demonstrate that the spiritual method of interpretation intensifies the force of every prohibition and commandment, and, while it elevates their meaning into a new world of truth and life, it gives direct and specific aim to their application.



## LECTURE III.

### THE TESTIMONY OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES REGARDING "THE SECOND COMING."

"The kingdom of God cometh not with outward show."—  
Luke xvii. 20.

"The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works."—Matthew xvi. 27, 28.

WE have now gained two positions from which to view the testimony of the Sacred Scriptures with regard to the important subject we are considering. We have examined their testimony concerning the "First Coming" from these two points of view, and we have found that the events, as recorded in the same Scriptures with the prophecies which foretell them, do not correspond in natural fact to their prophetic announcement, except in some small and apparently unimportant particulars. Indeed, the discrepancies between the prophecy and the fulfilment are so great that the very people who were expecting the Messiah did not recognize Him, and have continued for nineteen centuries to reject His claim to be the person "promised to their fathers," who was to "deliver them from the hand of their enemies."

But when the promise and the fulfilment are regarded from a spiritual point of view, they are found

to be in exact agreement in every particular, not only with regard to the few natural events designated by the prophets, but to the accomplishment of the grand and final purposes of the Lord in the creation and redemption of man. These results ought to give us confidence that the many insuperable difficulties, which have been met in understanding the predictions concerning the Second Coming, when literally interpreted, may be avoided, and that rational and satisfactory conclusions may be gained concerning the manner and the effects of it.

We propose, therefore, to take the main predictions concerning the Second Coming, as stated by our Lord Himself, and taught by the disciples after His departure, and to regard them from both points of view, the natural and the spiritual, that by a comparison of the results we may learn which method is in accordance with the nature and purpose of Revelation. If we find the same difficulties, when we follow "the letter," that we found in interpreting the prophecies relating to the First Advent, and if we reach the same clear and satisfactory results, when we regard them as spiritual facts clothed in such natural language as is best fitted to convey the Divine truth to men, we shall have good grounds for confidence that we have gained the true position to watch for the Lord's coming, and the right method to understand it. I can, however, do but little more, in this Lecture, than to consider the prophetic announcements of His coming from a natural point of view.

The fullest and most particular description of the Lord's Second Coming is found in the 24th chapter of Matthew. He first gives the sign of it, and then says: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

The same account, substantially, is given in the Gospels by Mark and Luke. In other places in His Word our Lord promises to come again. In Matthew xvi. 27, 28, He says: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, There be *some standing here*, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in His

kingdom.” In the closing words of the Revelation it is written: “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

The apostles also give abundant testimony that they expected the Lord to come again, and they use it as one of the most powerful motives to holy living. Paul exhorts the Corinthians of that day to be “*waiting* for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” They called it “the day of the Lord Jesus;” “the day of redemption.” Paul says, “Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord.” “I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He speaks of the “Lord Jesus Christ being revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,” prays that “the Lord will keep their hearts in patient waiting for Christ.” The most remarkable statement, however, is made by Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians (chapter iv.): “For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them who are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

These passages contain complete and explicit declarations upon the subject. Let us now examine them, and learn what they plainly and naturally teach.

1. There can be no doubt that they do explicitly teach a Second Coming of the Lord. This has been the belief of the Church in all ages. With regard to the fact of His coming there can be no doubt. In this respect His teachings are as clear as they were concerning His first coming.

2. It is equally evident that He does not tell us when He will come. He expressly declares that the day and hour is known to no man, nor angel. He says He will come suddenly, as a thief at night, and He exhorts His followers to watch. He compares His coming to the flood, the destruction of Sodom, and the lightning that cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west.

But while the day and the hour are unknown, He seems to teach, or I should say He does teach in the letter, that He would come in the time of the apostles, and that, without any doubt, was their opinion. He declared that this generation should not pass until all these things were fulfilled. But more especially still, He declared, "There be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom." He also says, at the conclusion of the parable of the fig-tree, "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at hand." He says, also, that He will come quickly. Paul says,

We who are alive at His coming shall be caught up in the air to meet Him,—evidently implying that he expected to be alive, and to be among those who would be caught up into the air to meet the Lord.

The apostles also thought they saw the signs of the Lord's Second Advent, which He Himself had given. There were false prophets, and they deceived many; iniquity abounded, and the love of many waxed cold. When the apostles saw these things they were confident that the end was nigh. They were in the constant expectation that the Lord would come. But we know He did not come in the personal form they expected Him. Eighteen centuries have passed away and He has not come in person, as the Church has generally looked for Him. Some mistake must have been made, therefore, in the doctrines and conceptions of theologians about the nature and manner of His coming, for we cannot suppose, or admit for a moment, that the Lord has made a promise which He will not keep. If we do not understand His promises it is not His fault. It is evident that the Lord has not taught us when He will come, even in those passages which seem to imply it. The declaration that that generation should not pass away until all those things were fulfilled,—that there were some standing there who should not taste death until they saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom,—cannot be true in the natural meaning of generation, and death.

Let us now examine His description of this grand



event, and see what He has said about the manner of His coming.

In Matthew xxiv. 29, 30, it is said: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

Now, if these statements are naturally true in one particular, they must be in every particular and in all their connections and relations. It will not do to make one part of a statement material fact and another symbol. It must be all symbol or all fact. But if we admit the passages which predict our Lord's Second Advent to be literal statements of the manner of His coming, we shall plunge into insuperable difficulties and irreconcilable contradictions, as we shall see if we examine them with care.

Let us admit, for example, that the tremendous cosmical changes described in the passages I have quoted have taken place. The sun and moon would be crushed as mere atoms in the rushing and concentration of all the worlds in the material universe to one point. There would be no material heavens, nothing but an enormous and chaotic mass of ruins. The earth would be buried millions of millions of miles beneath these superincumbent worlds. But, according to the account, after this destruction of the

material universe, "the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven: and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." How could there be any tribes of the earth to mourn? How could there be any clouds in heaven? Clouds are formed by vapors rising from the earth. How could they exist when the earth is covered millions of miles deep with the débris of a ruined universe? How could the tribes of the earth see the Son of man coming, when every human being must have been crushed to atoms by the falling worlds? How could the angels gather the elect from the four winds? What is meant by the four winds? and from one end of heaven to the other? There would be no north, no south, no material heavens; for, according to the context, they have been destroyed. The nature of the case justifies us in the conclusion that such events, in the order they are mentioned, would be impossible.

If we take into view some other passages in other parts of the Word, which are generally supposed to relate to this event, the impossibility of a natural interpretation will be still more evident. If the heavens are to be destroyed by fire, in whose fervent heat the elements will melt, there could be no clouds and no human beings remaining. Every vestige of humanity would be consumed. To be in the air would be no protection. If the whole material universe is to be destroyed, as some suppose, there would be no escape from the fury of the fire.

If we look a little farther along in the chapter,

we shall find another statement which renders it impossible that the account can be naturally true. It is said, "Then shall two be in the field: the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, the other left." How could the inhabitants of the world be engaged in their usual avocations after such commotion and general ruin? According to the context, all the tribes of the earth are mourning on account of the tremendous catastrophe which attends the Second Coming, and yet men are still in the fields at their usual work. Women are doing what no women in the civilized world have done for many generations. The stars have fallen, and yet men are not disturbed by it. Surely this cannot be a statement of natural events which will take place at the Second Coming. It is simply impossible that they all should occur.

But let us consider another point. The Lord is to come in the clouds of heaven, and every eye is to see Him. That also would be an impossibility, unless the laws of vision were changed. An object no higher than the clouds is visible for a few miles only on the face of the earth. Not even the sun or stars can be seen over more than half the globe at the same time. How, then, is the Lord's coming to be suddenly manifested to every eye? It would require a suspension of the laws of sight and the working of a constant miracle.

Human learning and ingenuity have been exhausted to overcome these difficulties and reconcile

these contradictions. Some of the events have been selected to the exclusion of others. Some have been supposed to relate to the destruction of Jerusalem, and some to the final Judgment; and many ingenious attempts have been made so to distribute the facts between the two events as to make the account consistent with itself and the events so far as they are known to men, or supposed to be known. Others, wearied with the effort to get a clear and rational result, have fallen back upon the Divine Omnipotence, and have rested in the belief that the Lord can do the most contradictory things, if He pleases.

In the mean time the difficulties remain, and the great fact that these terrible events may be ushered in upon us at any moment, stands as a wonder and a terror to men. There is no hope of a natural solution. The literal method of interpreting the Scriptures does not give us the means of solving the problem. If there were no other reasons than those we have adduced, there would be sufficient grounds for discarding a method which leads to such difficulties, and for rejecting the conclusions to which theologians have generally come by the use of it.

But there are other important considerations bearing directly upon the subject. The grand scenic effects which it is said will attend the Second Coming are used to describe other events that never were naturally fulfilled. Concerning the destruction of Babylon it is said: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and

fierce anger, to lay the land desolate : and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light : the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine" (Isaiah xiii. 9, 10). The same imagery is used in regard to Egypt : "And when I shall extinguish thee, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark ; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord" (Ezekiel xxxii. 7, 8).

But the most remarkable passage is found in the prophet Joel ii. 28-31 : "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions : and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come."

Now, it is a remarkable fact, and one which ought to have great weight with the most rigid literalist in interpreting all the passages of Scripture which relate to the Second Coming, that Peter quotes this prophecy, and says it was fulfilled at the day of Pentecost. Yet there were no such commotions as

are here predicted. The sun continued to shine, the moon retained her rocky substance; there were no unusual wonders in the heavens, and no blood, no fire, no pillars of smoke in the earth.

Here is an instance directly to the point, in which an apostle, whom theologians regard as inspired, and whose authority they accept, interprets these grand physical changes and commotions to mean the outpouring of the Spirit. With this example before them, we do not see how they can insist upon a natural interpretation of these remarkable phenomena. They are employed to designate the rise and fall of kingdoms, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In no case have they been literally fulfilled. Why, then, should they insist upon their natural occurrence at the Second Coming, especially when it involves them in insuperable difficulties? How can any rational mind ask for more conclusive evidence that the signs of the Second Coming must be spiritually interpreted?

We might rest the case here so far as regards the natural interpretation of the Scriptures which relate to this great event, though many more passages could be adduced which no one attempts to interpret naturally. As, for example, in Joel iii. 15, 16, it is said, "The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice out of Jerusalem." "The mountains quake at Him and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein"



(Nahum i. 5). These, however, must suffice for this part of the subject. But it may be useful to examine it from some other points of view, that we may see it in various aspects and get all the light possible upon it.

All things are so connected and related that one change necessitates another, one condition implies another. Man's physical nature is so nicely adjusted to the forms and forces of the material world that very slight changes in either would disturb, if they did not destroy, all the relations between man and the outward world which are essential to his life in it. At His First Advent, the Lord conformed to the conditions and laws of His own providence in nature. He caused no disturbance in material forces and harmonies. He adapted Himself to them. He came as a man among men, having a physical nature adjusted to physical substances. He took upon Himself our nature, engaged in human employments, conformed to social and civil customs, and was accessible to men and women in the lowest walks of life. He became so much like a merely human being, in outward appearance, that He could not be distinguished from the men of His time.

The letter of the Word represents Him as coming again in a material body to dwell among men. According to the natural statement, He will be invested with more grandeur, power, and glory; but still He is to live in a material world, to be cognizable by the natural senses, and to conform to physical laws. This implies that He is invested with a

material body now, and that He has been clothed with one ever since His ascension. If this is so, He must be in a material world. He certainly could not be in heaven visible to the angels and hold conscious intercourse with them. Those who have cast off the material body and have become pure spirits could not be with Him and rejoice in His presence; for there can be no natural, conscious, and orderly intercourse between pure spirits and beings clothed with a material body. Spiritual beings cannot live in a material world, and beings clothed with a material body cannot live in a spiritual world. That is impossible in the nature of things. But we cannot admit that the Lord has been living in some material world, remote from this, and separated from the hosts of heaven by the same walls of flesh that we are. That would be contrary to all His promises, and to the whole tenor of Revelation.

But, if He has been in heaven since His ascension, the centre of the angelic hosts, and the glorious object of adoration and love to all the redeemed, He must be dwelling in a glorified form which cannot be seen by the natural eye. In a form of such a nature, He could not dwell among men, as one human being with another. He could not come in the clouds. There would be no adjustment of His Divine nature to man in His material conditions by which conscious association could be effected.

The same difficulties exist in regard to the coming of the angels. If the Lord were surrounded by a magnificent retinue of angels, they could not be

seen by the natural eye. Nor could a spiritual being blow a material trumpet; and a spiritual trumpet could not be heard by living ears, much less by the ears of those who were dead, and whose material organism had turned to dust. This grand scenic display, which has been dwelt upon with so much eloquence and delight, is, therefore, impossible in the nature of things; and if it were not, it would be lost upon men from their inability to perceive it. When regarded in the light of reason, also, the whole scene is unworthy of the simplicity and dignity of the Divine character, and wholly incongruous with all known methods of the Lord's operation. How irrational and absurd the idea that the Lord will return to the world, as Paul says, "with a shout," surrounded with a vast army of angels filling the earth with the braying of trumpets! Such a scene partakes too much of self-glorification, and resembles too closely the triumphant return of vain and ambitious conquerors from their victories.

But, for the purpose of presenting the subject in as clear a light as possible, let us grant that all the difficulties in the literal interpretation of those passages of Scripture which predict the Second Coming are successfully overcome; let us admit that the Lord will come, to-morrow, or at any future time, exactly according to the description in the gospel of Matthew. Suppose He were to come in the flaming splendors and awful majesty of His glorified humanity, with a grand retinue of angels, call around Him all the Christians in the world, and raise from the

dead—as many think He will—all who have believed on Him in past ages, and set up His throne at Jerusalem, or London, or New York, would that be the accomplishment of purposes worthy of infinite wisdom? Would it be for the happiness of Christians themselves, the very persons for whose benefit it is supposed this grand demonstration has been made? Would Christians feel at ease and be at home in the presence of so much glory and majesty? Could they be happy in intimate association and communion with infinite purity? The laws of man's nature must be radically changed before such familiar intercourse would be possible.

The Lord is to be their King. Is He not now? Would they submit joyfully to His government? Then, why not now? He could teach them no other doctrine than He has already taught in His Word. He will “not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfil.” The Decalogue would stand. The Sermon on the Mount would remain in force. He would insist upon self-denial, upon purity of motive as well as act, upon keeping the Commandments, upon devotion to others. What would the members of the Church—Catholic and Protestant—say to such requisitions? Would they find it an easy matter to follow the Lord and live with Him on these conditions? Would they find perfect peace and happiness in such a life? There are no grounds in the nature of man, there are no attributes in the Divine character, and no revelations in the Word, for believing that such familiar

intercourse with the awful majesty of Divinity would be possible, much less conduce to the happiness, even of the best of Christians. When the apostle John saw the Son of man, as He appeared in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, he "fell at His feet as dead." How, then, could we bear His Divine presence and live in familiar intercourse with Him?

If we examine any other of the common theories concerning the Second Coming, we shall find that, when carried to its legitimate and logical conclusions, it is not in accordance with the general scope and spirit of Scripture, with enlightened reason, and the methods and purposes of the Divine wisdom, so far as we have any knowledge of them. On the contrary, they would defeat the purposes of the Divine love in the creation of man, and, consequently, they would not conduce to human happiness or to the glory of the Lord.

The doctrines which have been taught upon this subject in the Catholic and Protestant Churches have been based upon a few passages of Scripture, taken by themselves and interpreted according to their natural meaning, while there are many other passages which teach a different doctrine, and, when regarded from a natural point of view, there is no possibility of harmonizing them. Hence the variety of conflicting opinions upon this subject. The advocate of each theory appeals to Scripture, brings forward those passages which testify in its favor, and makes the most of them, while it keeps in

abeyance or attempts to parry the force of the testimony which tends to disprove it. In this respect theologians are like lawyers in their legal pleading. Their main object is to win the suit. For this purpose they make the most of the evidence in their favor, and do all in their power to discredit the testimony adverse to their case.

But the truth can never be gained in this way. We must rather proceed in a true scientific spirit. We must admit all the facts, and then try to understand them. No theory can be true which does not admit all the facts relating to it and account for them. This is an axiom in the pursuit of natural and spiritual knowledge. A scientist who should reject or attempt to discredit the testimony of undoubted facts because they were opposed to his theory, would lose the confidence of all scientific men. The same principle must apply to spiritual knowledge. The Sacred Scriptures are a vast storehouse of spiritual facts presented in natural forms. No theory or doctrine can be true which the whole of Scripture does not teach. But we cannot understand what the facts mean until we regard them from a true point of view.

This is as essential in natural as in spiritual knowledge. Facts cannot be judged from their appearances. There never has been, and there cannot be, any true and rational knowledge of the material world gained by the testimony of the senses. So long as men accepted the report of the senses as genuine truth, a true knowledge of the

motion, size, and mutual relation of the stars was impossible.

So it is with regard to spiritual facts. "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment," is a fundamental principle in interpreting the Scriptures. Given to teach spiritual truth, they must be interpreted from a spiritual point of view. Only from that point of view can they be correctly understood, and all their apparent contradictions reconciled.

But it is not sufficient to ignore their natural meaning, and then form such theories as best suit our fancy or our own creed. That must be taken into the account; and not only that, but a sufficient reason must be given for the presentation of spiritual truth in such a garb. The specific form and natural appearance of every fact must be accounted for. If it is not true that the great cosmical changes in the material universe, predicted in the Word, are to take place, why are these grand spiritual movements presented in this manner? Why is it said that the sun will be darkened, that the moon will be turned into blood, that there will be earthquakes, that the stars will fall from their places, and that the Son of man will come in the clouds of heaven? These are questions which must be satisfactorily answered. To do this will be one of the principal purposes of the succeeding lectures.



## LECTURE IV.

### THE END OF THE WORLD.

“And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?”—Matthew xxiv. 3.

THE special topic which we propose to consider in this discourse is central to the whole subject of the Second Coming. It is the point of view from which all the facts and principles relating to it must be regarded and their genuine meaning determined. Any misconception of what is meant by “the end of the world” will enter into and modify our understanding of the signs of this grand event, and bias all our conclusions concerning their meaning. If we do not clearly understand what is meant by “world,” we shall be reasoning about an unknown quantity, we shall have no true objective, and the facts we use will have no pertinence. We may construct ingenious theories, which, having no basis in universal principles, will give place to others more ingenious and equally baseless, as children build houses of cards for the pleasure of demolishing them and renewing the structure.

It is of essential importance, therefore, to a true understanding of the subject that we know what it is,—what our Lord specifically meant by the words

He used. If by "world" He meant the material planet we inhabit, and by "end" the annihilation of it, as many believe He did, then we have a definite subject distinctly before us, and we can weigh all the facts in the balances of this event, and direct our reasonings to it as to their proper centre.

But if He meant a state of human society, either civil or ecclesiastical, natural or spiritual, the bearing of all our facts, the meaning of our signs, and the method of our reasonings must be wholly changed. We seek an entirely different goal,—we are thinking of another world, to whose laws we must conform, and by whose principles every sign must be interpreted, and in whose balances every fact must be weighed. Let us, then, do the best in our power to understand what world our Lord meant whose end He predicted.

There are many kinds and degrees of worlds. There is the animate, and the inanimate world; the world of mind, of thought, and of affection; there is a civil, a moral, a material, and a spiritual world. Was it this material planet to which our Lord referred? or was it a world of mind, of thought, and affection,—a special form and degree of understanding spiritual truth, and, consequently, a distinct and peculiar quality of human character and life as the result of it? We must gain admittance for our thought into the right world.

It is a singular fact, a knowledge of which will greatly assist us in determining this question, that *aiōn*, the word the apostles used, and which is trans-

lated "world," does not mean the earth or any material body. "It is very remarkable," says a modern commentator, "that the word which means world, or the earth, in Greek is never used where what is supposed to be the end of the world is described." It is remarkable. I do not know of an instance where a preconceived doctrine has so fully taken possession of the minds of translators that they could not see the true meaning of the original word, when it was so plain that it seems quite impossible to misunderstand it.

The Greek word *aiōn*, translated "world," is used more than a hundred times in the New Testament. It is translated world about forty times. The other sixty instances in which the word occurs are rendered by "ever," "evermore," "never," "for ever and ever." *Aionios*, the adjective derived from it, which occurs some seventy times, is (with three exceptions, where it is rendered "world") translated indiscriminately "eternal" and "everlasting." Every one can see that such a variety in rendering the same word—giving it at one time the meaning of a material earth; at another, a period of time; at another, eternity—must cause great obscurity, and difficulty in understanding its true import. The absurdity becomes still greater when it is known that neither *aiōn* nor *aionios* has any primary and direct reference to time. The true meaning of *aiōn* is age, the special state or condition which characterizes the life of a people. It can also be applied to material things, and to natural or

spiritual beings, but in all cases it means their state or condition.

As the precise meaning of this word has such an important bearing upon the whole subject we are considering, it is worthy of full and explicit illustration. There is an abundance of the highest authority for the fact that *aiōn* is the equivalent of "age." Let us, then, direct our attention to the meaning of "age." Its essential meaning is the state or condition of the subject to which it relates. It is used in this sense,—

1. In relation to the earth itself. The various states the material substances which compose the earth have passed through are called ages. Geologists speak of the Azoic age, by which they do not mean any definite period of time, but a condition of the earth devoid of all life; the Palæozoic age, which is the state of the earth when life first appeared; the absence or the presence of life being the special characteristic of these ages.

2. It is used to designate the physical, social, civil, moral, and spiritual condition of the inhabitants of the world, in a great variety of particulars. We speak of the flint age, meaning the condition of men when the use of implements made of flint was a marked quality of their industrial and civil life. We call the present the age of steam, of railroads, a mechanical and a scientific age, to designate the peculiarities of our time in regard to locomotion, and the employment of material forces to do our work. Flint and human muscles, steel and the

steam-engine, are such peculiar and notable characteristics of human intelligence that they appropriately designate eras in man's progress from a savage to a civilized and an enlightened state. The dark ages is a well-known period in man's history, which describes his spiritual ignorance and superstition. The age of chivalry was characterized by a peculiar mode of warfare, and the social condition which grew out of it. We speak of enlightened, ignorant, barbarous, and war-like ages, and many more. In none of these instances does age mean the material world, nor does it designate a definite period of time. It refers solely to the state of the people designated by the descriptive word attached to it. Such ages, it is true, occur in time,—they have their beginning and end, and in this way they may come to mean a period of time. It is, however, a merely inferential one. They cannot be used to measure time, but must themselves be measured by it.

3. In the Sacred Scriptures the word of which age is the equivalent, is employed to designate the spiritual condition of men. When regarded from a spiritual point of view, it means an age, generation, or dispensation of spiritual truth. The disciples did not mean to ask the Lord about the end of the material world. They evidently had no such thought in their minds. They meant the end of the civil or ecclesiastical polity of the Jewish people, which was to be superseded, as they supposed, by the personal reign of the Lord, when He should establish His kingdom at Jerusalem, and make

them the sharers of His power and glory. They had no idea that the earth was to be destroyed. If such a thought had been in their minds, they would have used another word, for *aiōn* is never used in the New Testament as the name of a material world.

An examination of its usage in the Word may give us still further help in gaining a true and definite conception of its meaning. It is found in four different forms,—two in the singular and two in the plural number. In the first and the most common form, its relation to the words connected with it is expressed by the English *of* or *in*, as in the passage we are considering, and many others. In these cases it is generally translated *world*, as “the end of the world,” “the cares of this world,” “the children of this world,” “the ends of the world,” “the gods of this world,” “rich in this world,” and “wise in this world.”

In the second form, in the singular number, it has a different relation to the other words in the sentence,—a relation which is usually expressed by *into*, *for*, and *during*, in the sense of *for*,—as “for the summer,” “for the year,” meaning *during* the summer, the year. It is usually translated “*for*.” The original word involves *motion into*, and *through*, where the subject admits of it. It is evident that it would not do to render *aiōn* by “world” in such instances. It would be nonsense or falsehood to say, *Thine be the power and glory for the worlds;* he that eateth this bread shall

live "for the world;" I will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you "for the world;" Christ abideth with you "for the world," or "during the world." Consequently, in such cases *aiōn* is translated "ever," which is no nearer the meaning than world in the former case.

In the plural number the translation is usually "forever." Sometimes the word is repeated, and then the rendering is "for ever and ever." If the first meaning was adhered to it would read, "Yesterday, to-day, and for worlds," to whom be glory "for worlds of worlds," behold, I am alive "for worlds of worlds," tormented day and night "for worlds of worlds," and so on, in the many cases where this word occurs.

The true meaning of the word is "age;" and if it was so translated, and by age we understood a dispensation of Divine truth, or a state of society formed by such truth, we should have a correct idea of what the Lord intended to express,—we should have the genuine spiritual truth. A few examples will show this. We should have the end, the cares, the children, the princes, the beginning of the, or this, age, this dispensation. Instead of "forever" and "for ever and ever," we should have a spiritual and universal idea, with no reference to space and time. The passages would read, "Thine be the power and glory for ages;" "yesterday, to-day, and for ages;" "He shall reign 'for ages of ages';" "worship Him that liveth 'for ages of ages.'" By this rendering we are not limited by the material



world, by time and space, and we escape the multitude of difficulties which beset a merely natural interpretation. An age can come to an end, and the world and the material universe still remain to be the birthplace of human beings and the home of their infancy. The Lord can carry into effect His purposes of love and mercy through ages of ages, in every state of man's spiritual progress, from the lowest natural age to the highest spiritual age, as He has carried the earth through all its geological ages, from its primeval fiery or aqueous condition to its present state.

With this idea of the meaning of *aiōn* we are freed from the absurdity of looking for the end of this material world; our attention can be turned in a higher direction. The Lord's coming will not be to the material earth, but to the spiritual condition of men,—to the understanding and to the affections. The signs of His coming will not be physical commotions of the earth and natural movements among men, but commotions and changes in their spiritual state of life. The natural interpretation of the Scriptures relating to this subject has dragged the meaning down and buried it in the earth. The spiritual raises it up again, clears away the clouds of sense, and gives us a new and higher point of view, from which all the predictions relating to the Second Coming and all the descriptions of it are seen in true and rational light. We are now in a favorable position to understand what age or what world has come to an end.

Here it may be well to state a law of the Divine order in the progress of the human race, and, indeed, of all progress. The ascent from the lowest to the highest forms of the creation, either taken as a whole, or in the individual objects and creatures which compose it, is not by a steady and regular rise, as in an inclined plane. It is by steps from one degree or story to another. The plant is not a more excellent mineral, an animal is not a perfected plant, and man is not an animal in finer form. It may be true that we cannot draw the line where one age ceases and the other begins, because they are so intimately related. But the excellence of an age or kingdom of nature, does not increase in the direction of the one which rises out of it, but in an opposite one. The diamond, ruby, and emerald, which are the perfection of mineral forms, are less like a plant than even the dust of the earth. The horse, the sheep, and the ox do not approach man in external form so near as the monkey, and yet they are the most useful and distinctly animal in their nature.

The same law is seen in the formation of liquids and solids from gases. Water is not a more excellent gas than oxygen and hydrogen, but a substance entirely distinct from either. In the composition of man's nature, the soul is not a more excellent material body, though it may have the same form and organization. It is entirely distinct from it in all the principles of its being and the modes of its action. It cannot be sustained by the same food;

it cannot be developed by the same kind of culture; it is not bounded by the same limits. Indeed, though closely allied to the material body and dwelling within it, it occupies a world of its own, which is not subject to physical laws, and which transcends all material limitations. Thus there are worlds within worlds, each distinct from the other in nature, modes of action, and laws of development.

Age succeeds age in a regular ascent, or descent, according to the direction of the movement. In the material universe there was first a descent from the higher to the lower forms of matter,—from the primary and purest material substance, through ethers, gases, fluids, to minerals. When a solid basis was reached, the ascent advanced from mineral to plant, from plant to animal, from animal to man.

Man contains in himself all the stories of descent and ascent; he forms a Jacob's ladder between earth and heaven. Consequently he passes through all the ages, or distinct forms and modes of being, both as an individual and as a race, which exist in the whole material universe. He is a microcosm, and there lie enfolded in his material and spiritual natures all the forms, substances, and modes of action which exist in the macrocosm. In his descent from his primeval innocence and wisdom, he has passed through all the distinct ages or states of spiritual and moral excellence to the lowest. This descent was not like that of an inclined plane; it was by distinct steps, or ages, during each one of

which a quality of character and a principle of truth, or error, distinct from those which preceded and followed it, was worked out to its legitimate results. When the end had been reached, and its special principles consummated, a new age succeeded.

The human race has passed through four such ages, or worlds, in its descent from the heights of innocence and wisdom to the lowest deeps of error, sin, and shame. This state was reached when our Lord came into the world by taking upon Himself man's fallen nature. This is the reason why it is so often called, in the prophetic language, "the last days," "the last times," "the end."

As every good age is destroyed by the falsification of the truths and the corruption of the corresponding affections which constituted it, and every evil age, by carrying out its false principles to their logical consequences, its end is always described as taking place in darkness and affliction. As a new age always succeeds the one which has passed away, which is formed and characterized by new principles, the truths which constitute them are called a coming of the Lord, either to create or to destroy. There are, therefore, two aspects of the coming,—one from the night of the age which is ended, the other from the light of the new one which is dawning. Consequently we find many descriptions of the event from both points of view. "Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?" (Amos v. 20.) "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the

earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isaiah lx. 2). "The Day-Spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death" (Luke i. 79).

The Lord comes to every age in the form adapted to its nature or state. He came in the flesh at the end of the Jewish age because man had fallen so low that He could not reach him in any other way. He had come before in the form of an angel, and "by the mouth of His holy prophets." He did not come in the flesh before, because every age must complete its circuit, and reach its end according to the laws of the Divine order. The principles which constitute one age cannot be blended with another. Good men have often wondered why "the Lord delayed His coming" so long, why He did not nip sin in its bud. If He had done it, the same temptations and the same tendency to yield to them would have remained. The problems of human life must be worked out by human experience. As in the material world, there must be a descent from the highest forms of matter to the lowest, before there could be a firm basis for a creation of the higher degrees of organic and spiritual life; so man must sink to the lowest, after his descent began, before his fall could be arrested, and he could be raised to the highest.

As we have already said, the Jewish age was the lowest to which man could descend and retain any vestige of humanity. It is essential to a clear and

rational knowledge of the Second Coming that we should get as distinct an idea as possible of the essential nature of the Jewish world, that we may see how the Christian age differed from it.

1. It was a purely natural age. It is maintained by many whose opinions are entitled to respect, that the Jew had no idea of a spiritual world and a distinctly spiritual life. Whatever words he might use in speaking of God and worshipping Him, he attached to them only natural ideas. God was a king, differing from other kings only by being more powerful and terrible; and the ground of the regard of the Jewish people for Him consisted mainly in the fact that they thought Him to be more powerful than the gods of the heathen, and that He would some time come to Jerusalem, occupy the throne of David, and raise them to the pinnacle of earthly power and glory. There is no evidence that they had any love for Him as a Being of infinite goodness. They delighted to think that they had the most powerful God, and that they were His special favorites. They praised Him quite as much for what they believed to be His implacable hatred to their enemies, as for any excellencies of character He might possess. Their ideal of a God was a being who regarded them with a personal affection, who had the power and the purpose to make them the rulers of the earth, and all other nations their servants. In their prosperity they swelled with pride at the thought that they were the special favorites of a King mightier than

all the rulers of the earth; and in their adversity they cringed and fawned, and hoped by servility to regain His favor.

2. Their worship was purely ritualistic, and of the grossest form. It is difficult for us to conceive of a state in which such a form of worship is possible. How could a rational being believe that the slaying of beasts and the burning of their flesh would be pleasing to Jehovah? It would only be possible to a people who had gross and sensual ideas of the object of their worship and of the principles of goodness and truth. The Jews had no conception that there was any spiritual significance in the subjects and forms of their sacrifices and the various rituals of their worship. A holy man was one who was punctilious in every form and tittle of their ritual. Purity was freedom from ceremonial uncleanness. Righteousness consisted in a rigid external observance of the law,—keeping the outside of the platter clean. Their highest standard of goodness was an outward, physical conformity to prescribed statutes and laws. They had no conception that it had reference to the internal quality of thought and affection.

3. They had no spiritual idea of true charity or love to the neighbor. Their principle of human comity and brotherhood was “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,”—love of friends, hatred of enemies. They were hard, savage, and revengeful toward their enemies; suspicious, cruel, and lustful in their intercourse with one another. So stiff-



necked, obdurate, and prone to evil were they, that even the grandest displays of the Divine power, and the most swift and terrible punishments, did not effectively restrain them from neglecting the external observances of their religion,—from lapsing into idolatry and the grossest sins. Few in number, and occupying a mere speck of the earth's surface, they thought themselves superior to all other people, and treated them with supreme scorn and contempt. The nations or heathen were dogs, in their estimation, with whom it was a disgrace to associate, and whose contact, even, was contamination.

But no merely human mind can paint the character of that age in colors as vivid and terrible as our Lord Himself has done. It was from corrupt sources. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." It was a "generation of vipers." The Jews were favored above all other people by special and repeated revelations of Divine truth, and yet, instead of profiting by them, "they made the Word of God of no effect through their traditions." Their innate and radical hostility to spiritual and Divine truth is demonstrated to the life by their cruel treatment of the men who were sent to warn, instruct, and save them. "They killed the prophets and stoned them who were sent unto them." So blind were they to all consciousness of spiritual truth, so deaf to all warning against danger and to all calls to a pure spiritual life, so dead to all heavenly influences, that they scorned, rejected, and crucified the Lord, who

came to redeem and save them. It is impossible to conceive of any greater destitution of moral excellence, or any blacker crime than this. It was the culmination of wickedness, for it was the foulest deed committed in the blaze of the clearest light.

This age came to an end, essentially, when the Lord was in the world. "Now," He says, "is the judgment of this world," of this order or state of life, "now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Its ritualistic worship was abandoned, its ceremonial laws were abolished, its temple was overthrown, the existence of its civil government became extinct, and its people were scattered to the four winds. History supplies us with no example of a more complete and terrible consummation.

The Christian age, which succeeded this, was a grand step upward. It was a new world of thought and affection. It had its seminal principles, which gave special form to its conceptions of truth, to its methods of reasoning, and which determined its conclusions. It was animated with new and purer affections, and the men of the age became the embodiment of a new and a higher life. The central principle of every age is the conception of God which prevails in it. This truth enters as a qualifying influence into the understanding and the affections, contracts or enlarges, debases or exalts them. It gives light and power; it is the centre of attraction, and lifts man up from the earth and from the degrading influences of a sensual life.

1. The Christian age had an entirely new idea of

God. It took a distinct step from the natural to the spiritual plane of thought. God was no longer regarded solely as a civil ruler, differing from Pharaoh, Cæsar, and David only in the extent of His wisdom and power. He was a spiritual and a Divine Being; and although the conceptions of the nature of the spiritual and the Divine were vague and imperfect, still it was an advance into a new world. There was a new view of His mode of existence. The God of the new age was not limited by time and space. Though concealed from the senses of men, He was present to their spirits; He came nearer to their thoughts and affections, and by the influences of His spirit operated more powerfully upon the higher planes of their being. They also had a more humane conception of His character. Justice was tempered with mercy, truth was warmed with love.

This new knowledge of the Divine person and character gave to men new ideas of the nature and forms of worship. They learned that "God is a spirit," and it followed as a natural consequence that "they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." With such an idea of God, sacrificial worship became impossible. The old must pass away, it had become obsolete. The fires went out on the altars, for they had served their use and they must give place to that which they had represented. The altars of stone were changed into truth and love, and transferred to the understanding and the heart. The burnt sacrifices of animals became the consecration of the affections; incense ascended as

heavenly desires in the form of prayer; and scrupulous ritualistic observances were transfigured into devotion to the principles of a moral and a spiritual life. Every man who received these principles became a temple grander than Solomon's, in whose "Holy of Holies" dwelt the spirit of God, and whose inner and outer courts embraced all the principles and forms of human thought and affection, represented by the complicated and cumbersome rituals of the old symbolic forms of worship. God became a new being to the Christian, and worship, lifted out of the blood and smoke and repulsive forms of slain beasts, the exercise of spiritual affection guided by heavenly truths.

2. In this new world of thought and life men had higher and more enlarged ideas of their relations to one another. The Lord had given them a new commandment, that they should love one another. They gradually rose out of the narrow and selfish limits of the Jewish world, to the conception of the universal brotherhood of man. It was a difficult and painful step for the apostles to take, though they had been taught by the Lord Himself. It showed how inveterate were their prejudices, and how contracted were their ideas of the Divine goodness and mercy. The boundary-lines of country and race, which had separated the Jew from all other people as with a wall of brass, were gradually extended until they embraced the whole of humanity. The mind was elevated from the natural to the spiritual. "He is a Jew who is one inwardly; and

circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter" (Romans ii. 29). The law of the Jewish age, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," was succeeded by the commandment, "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away." The principle which had been a rule of action in the former age, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy," gave place to the broad and heavenly principle embodied in the words, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

The sermon on the Mount embodied the seminal principles of the new age. It reversed the ideas of the world which had passed away, upon all human relations, and the very nature of the elements which constitute a pure, noble, and distinctly human character.

It was the creation of a new world, in which men would be illuminated by a new sun of truth, animated by new and more elevated affections, and reach richer and more blessed attainments. Every faculty of the human mind was quickened by its influence to a larger and a more excellent development. Human society was elevated, knowledge upon all subjects was diffused, new arts sprung up under the quickening influences of the higher life. In every respect it was a larger, a brighter, and a more excellent world than the one which it displaced. It was a grand step upward from the

lowest deep to which man had sunk on his return to the Father's house.

These are the worlds of whose creation and end our Lord speaks in His Word. They are ages, or distinct and special degrees, forms, and qualities of spiritual truth, which had their rise, culmination, and end. They were larger and more excellent and worthier of the name of world than any material earth, and more diverse in all the qualities which belonged to them. Each one was full-orbed and complete in itself. At His personal Advent the Lord instituted a new age: He created a new world of thought and life by the truths He revealed to men, and the more potent spiritual influences He brought to bear upon them. This is the world whose end He predicted, and to which He promised to come. This is the world which is the subject of the signs which herald and attest His presence. We must, therefore, place ourselves in this world to watch for His appearing.

## LECTURE V.

### THE END OF THE WORLD: ITS CAUSE AND SIGNS.

“And as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?”—Matthew xxiv. 3.

THE Christian Age, instituted by our Lord during His First Advent, was, as we have seen, a distinct and grand step in man's spiritual progress. It was a new world, originating in specific causes and attaining new results. The men of that age breathed a purer atmosphere. A brighter sun shone upon them, in whose light they saw all things relating to their spiritual nature in clearer form. Their heaven was studded with brighter stars of knowledge, the earth was richer in all the elements essential to spiritual growth, and a more genial climate fostered and quickened the spiritual faculties of men. It was a new state, and it was, in every respect, more favorable for the development of a finer, nobler, and a more elevated character than the age which preceded it.

It was a grand step to a higher level of life, but it was not the final one. New knowledge was gained, but that knowledge consisted in unrelated facts. The world into which men had been introduced was



rich in new truths, and opened many attractive fields for exploration. But it was not a scientific world. The men who could receive the new truths and breathe the new atmosphere were simple and child-like in nature. They had no idea that all things are related; that there is a Divine order in the universe of mind and matter, by which all things make a harmonious whole.

It was an age of faith, not of sight. "We walk by faith, not by sight," was the clear and sharp definition of its intellectual character by its great apostle. Truth was received on testimony, not on rational knowledge. Consequently, the firmness with which the new truths were held was measured by the validity of the testimony and the agreement of the witnesses. This was a source of great power, so long as men held to the facts, and lived by them, without questioning their truth or attempting to explain their nature; but of great weakness, when they began to form doctrines and to arrange them into systems of theology.

The new age was a distinct step from a purely natural to a spiritual state. The men of that age attained to the idea that God is a spirit; that man possesses a spiritual nature; that there is a spiritual world, and an endless life beyond this. But their conceptions of all these truths were not clear. They saw "through a glass darkly;" they saw "in part." The great problems of life, which had never been seen before, now loomed up before the mind, but they were enigmas which they had no means and

no power to solve. They saw spiritual truths through the "glass" of nature by means of the senses. But this was a very imperfect and illusory medium. It distorted the forms of spiritual truth, and so obscured its essential nature that it could not be clearly understood. The mind was not yet fully emancipated from old influences and modes of receiving truth; it still adhered to the letter so firmly that it could only rise above it with great difficulty. As an inevitable result, the truths of the new and the old age became entangled with one another,—the appearance and the genuine truth could not be clearly distinguished,—and the mind was led into questionings, doubt, and great errors.

This result was inevitable, and the history of the Church supplies us with abundant proof that it was so. In the new age there was a higher and a truer idea of God, but the conceptions of Him were not complete,—they did not satisfy all the demands of the understanding or of the heart. So long as men worshipped the Lord Jesus Christ in affectionate simplicity, without attempting to define His relations to the Father, they met with no great disturbance to their faith. But when that question came distinctly before them they could not avoid it, and they did not possess sufficient knowledge to solve it. The knowledge did not belong to that age; it could not be found in that world. It was one of the "enigmas" of which Paul speaks, which men saw, "through the glass" of nature and the letter of the Word, with sufficient distinctness to discover

its existence, but not in light clear enough to understand its nature. The result of their reasonings was a trinity of three Divine Persons so distinct in their attributes that no metaphysical subtleties and no denials could avoid the result of a practical belief in three gods. Men might say one, but they thought three, and they constructed their theologies and their plans of salvation upon the notion that there were three. The Rock, which is the chief cornerstone in all Christian belief, fell upon the age and ground it to powder.

The men of the new age had some knowledge of Spirit. They knew that it was distinct from matter, but they had no means of learning its nature with sufficient clearness to understand in what the distinction consisted. Generally, it was supposed to be the opposite of matter in all respects, not even possessing substance and form. But this was denying to it every conceivable mode of existence, and putting it entirely beyond the limits of human thought. To get any distinct idea of spirit, they were compelled, by the nature of the human mind, to bring it within the limits of time and space, and give it substance and form, though they made it as much of a shadow as possible. But this was acting against the premises from which they set out. The inevitable consequence was distraction, uncertainty concerning its nature, and even doubt of its existence.

Other examples might be given in abundance. Indeed, the whole history of the Christian Church

is full of testimony to the fact that this age contained within it the elements of its own destruction. The human mind had been quickened with a larger influx of Divine forces, new and grand truths had dawned upon men; new hopes were awakened, and new aspirations roused up the affections and quickened the understanding to new activities. But there was no safety except in simple obedience. The truths of this new world were presented to the mind according to their appearances, rather than in their rational and genuine forms. They were received by faith on the testimony of others, and not in the clear light of reason. There could be no safety for such a world of thought and affection as this but in absolute obedience. The wise teachers of the age have seen this, and have warned men against the danger of using their reason. They were right in saying that the understanding must be kept in subjection to faith. In the world of which we are speaking there is no safety in any other course.

But that was impossible. In spiritual life, humanity was in a state of childhood, growing into manhood. Men were learning to think; and when men have learned to think upon one subject, they will begin to think upon all others which interest them. They were beginning to discover that all things are related, and this discovery led them to compare, to reason, and define. There was, therefore, no other course than to go on to the logical and inevitable conclusions.

This quickening of the human mind was due to a new influx of power and life from the Lord; it was the effect of His coming; and all the phenomena attending it were the signs of His coming.

We have now gained a true point of view to watch for the Second Coming, and to recognize the signs of it. We understand that we are in a world of mind; that we are talking about a peculiar intellectual and moral state, and the manifestation of a distinct degree and special forms of truth. We must look, therefore, for mental and spiritual signs. The natural objects and actions must be regarded from a spiritual point of view; they must be taken as we take words, as signs of ideas, of principles, of great spiritual activities. As these signs are not arbitrary, but the legitimate effects of the nature of the world in which they take place, and of the coming of the Lord to it, we must try to trace them to their true causes. If we can do this it will be a sure evidence that our principles and our reasoning are correct.

The first sign which our Lord gives is this, "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." This would be the inevitable result of all mental activity and independent thought in the given conditions. Men would come to diverse conclusions. From intellectual temperament and bias of character, they would give undue importance to some special subject. They would insist that some doctrine which they had formulated

was the essential principle of Christianity, and, according to the plausibility and power of their reasonings, many would be deceived. Every false doctrine has its followers. There is no absurdity too great for men to believe. There have been false Christs in every period of the Church, and many have been deceived by them.

The differences of opinion, which were inevitable as soon as men began to explain the rational grounds of their faith, would naturally give rise to controversy. The men of that age were earnest and passionate. They had not learned patience and toleration. They would be ready to combat any departure from common opinion. Hence would arise fierce discussions. There would be wars and rumors of wars. Evil passions would be aroused and come into conflict; one false doctrine would be arrayed against another, until all the principles which constituted the age would be involved. The conflict of opinion with opinion, of theory with theory, are the wars which are the signs of coming judgment. Men do not dispute about what they know. There is no ground for a conflict of opinion about the demonstrations of geometry. Wars originate in differences of belief in what men think they know, and in the selfish loves involved in opinions and leadership. When a man begins to advocate a doctrine, however false it may be, his self-love becomes involved in it, his passions are aroused to maintain it, and he comes into a mental and moral state which disqualifies him from seeing the truth, and destroys

the love of it. He loves his doctrine, his opinion, and he is ready to defend and to disseminate it.

The natural result of these disputes about doctrines are spiritual famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. Heavenly affections are not fed by fierce discussions about doctrines the truth of which is a matter of opinion, or of belief, founded upon personal testimony. The importance of belief in a particular doctrine is regarded as the essential requisite in spiritual life, and while the leaders of opinion are waging war against one another, love to the Lord and the neighbor are left to starve, the moral forces of the age are weakened, men are taught that it is more important to think right than to do right, and the principles of purity, integrity, and true charity lose their quickening and elevating power, and the natural passions and lusts breed a moral pestilence. The earthquakes will follow. When the fires of controversy are kindled, and are fiercely burning, there will be commotions in the Church which will shake its very foundations.

These are sure signs of a dissolving age. Its forces are arrayed against one another, and a "kingdom divided against itself cannot stand." If it were a conflict between clear and immutable truth and error, between heavenly affections and infernal passions, the result would be different. But such was not the case. Men fought about questions which they themselves did not understand, and it is now generally conceded that both parties were, in many respects at least, wrong.



These conflicts of opinion ; this starved and, consequently, lean and feeble condition of spiritual life, in which the vital forces of the age lost their tone, character was debased, lusts bred pestilence, and the foundations of society were shaken, were manifest signs of the approaching end. When men begin to doubt, and to make war upon one another on account of difference of opinion, there is no possibility of arresting the conflict, and the consequences of it, until some definite conclusions are reached. The problem must be worked out to its legitimate conclusions. False doctrines give rise to evil practices, and sin is the prolific mother of error. When the destructive forces of an age are let loose, they increase in intensity and deadly power. Difference of belief rouses the passions ; zeal in the defence of opinion becomes hatred ; passion obscures the understanding and dulls the perception of the truth. Opposite parties lose sight of the principle in which the conflict originated, and wage war upon one another with fierce and deadly passion. They begin to afflict, to hate, to betray, and to kill one another.

This is literally true. The material world becomes the theatre of these cruelties. In these signs of the end of the age, our Lord gives us a true and terrible picture of scenes which actually occurred on the natural plane of life. He dictated history centuries before its time, though this was not His primary purpose. He was giving the natural signs of events which were to take place in the realm of the spirit ; and if men would regard them as signs,

rather than the actual events which He was describing, they would understand them. They would find in the pages of history, which are black with the recital of the most cruel persecutions, the fiercest hatreds, and the foulest crimes committed in the name of religion, the sure indications of the end of the world in which they had their origin. These natural conflicts and calamities were the legitimate effects of the doubt and darkness, the false principles and corrupt affections, which characterized the spiritual condition of humanity.

If time permitted, and it were necessary to the elucidation of the general principles of the subject, every particular mentioned, even those apparently the most unimportant, could be shown to be signs of the approaching end. This, however, would require volumes instead of a lecture. But if we keep in mind that the words our Lord used stand for principles and forms of a spiritual age, and describe forces operating in a world of mind, we may see that even the most unimportant and enigmatical sayings are full of significance. He is not speaking of the Judea in Asia, but of the spiritual Judea,—the Church,—whose mountains are the highest and holiest affections. When the dreadful calamities of the last days come upon the age, where can those who live in Judea—who still possess any spiritual life—flee? Where can they find protection and rest but in the mountains of heavenly affections? It cannot be in faith, for that has been shaken; it cannot be in knowledge, for that has been destroyed.

It can only be in a simple and childlike trust in the mercy of the Lord. A house is the state of affection in which men dwell. The top, or highest part of it, is the inmost or highest affections. In the doubt and darkness and distracting opinions of the last times, man can find nothing in his memory or in his understanding to help him; he need not go down into them in the hope that he can find the means of averting the calamities of the "last days." The same general idea is represented by him who is in the field. There can be no going back; no help can be found in the past. There is nothing in the store-house of the memory or of the natural mind that can avert the consummation.

The conflicts and destructive passions will be still more harmful and woeful to those in whom the new spiritual life is in the first stages of creation, who are meant by "them who are with child, and them that give suck." Man must be born from above, or he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. But wars, and betrayals, and hatreds, the lust of pride and power, abounding iniquity and coldness of pure affections, are not favorable to the implantation and growth of the tender germs of heavenly affections. The currents of spiritual life are frozen with the winter's cold of faith without love; its tender germs blasted in the fierce fires of lustful passions. The moral atmosphere was corrupt, and bred pestilence. "The whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint."

The culmination of calamities which can befall

any age, and which foretells its end with absolute certainty, is the destruction of the central principle which constitutes it. To destroy that, kills its germs, its vital centre; it is the "abomination of desolation." It bears the same relation to the age of which it is the efficient cause and moulding life that the soul bears to the material body. To destroy it is death to the age. The central principle of every distinct era in man's progress is the idea of God which prevails. All its specific doctrines upon the most vital subjects, all its ends of action, and the means employed to attain them, spring from it, as the form of the plant, in general and in particular, the color of its blossoms and the quality of its fruit, are determined by the seed from which it grows. When men have a true and an exalted conception of God, they come intellectually into orderly relations with the Source of all power; they become acquainted with the principles of all order; they have grander conceptions of their own nature; they are animated by nobler ends of action, and see more clearly the true methods of reaching them. Pervert, debase, or obscure that conception, and you pervert and debase all the motives and means of action; you obscure every principle of truth and goodness.

The loss of the simple, distinct, and unitary idea of God, which constituted the Christian age in its primitive purity, was "the abomination of desolation" mentioned by our Lord. The unity of the Divine personality was destroyed, as a doctrine of

the Church, by the Council which established the tri-personal theory of God. It practically destroyed monotheism in the Christian world, and by so doing laid the axe at the root of its tree of life; for the Christian age was based upon the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead in the one person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the sun of this world. "The Lord God is a sun." "He was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." He also declared, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." If we understand by these words the world of truth and love, which is their true meaning, it follows, as a necessary effect, that when He was put out of it, as its supreme and only source of life and light, and as the only proper object of worship, the world of which He is the light must come to an end. The knowledge of His essential nature became obscured when He was given the second—and a secondary—place in the Trinity. The thoughts became distracted and the affections divided between two persons. He was not regarded as the only Creator, as the only source of life and light, as the only proper object of worship. The Divine attributes were divided between Him and two other Persons, and the result was the loss of a distinct and unitary idea of God, confusion and destructive conflict, and irreconcilable contradictions, which tended to destroy all practical belief in a Supreme Being with whom man can sustain orderly and helpful relations.

When these false doctrines had worked out their

legitimate effects, bringing doubt and darkness and tribulations in every direful form upon men, the state of the age is truthfully described by the great cosmical changes mentioned by our Lord. "The sun was darkened." He was the sun in its heaven from which came all the light of its truth, all the warmth and quickening power of its love, all the joy and peace of its life. The effect of these false doctrines upon the age were precisely the same that the darkening of the material sun would have upon the earth. Science and human experience show us what terrible consequences would result from even a slight increase or diminution of the sun's light and heat. The earth would be congealed with perpetual frost, or parched and blasted with constant heat. Must not as direful effects take place in the moral and spiritual world from the darkening of its sun?

If the sun were darkened the moon could not give her light. Like the human mind, the moon has no light in herself. She can only reflect it. If the source is darkened, the objects which reflected the light must cease to shine. The Lord is the sun, faith is the moon. We can have no belief in God except by means of the light which comes from Him, as we can only see the objects of nature by the light reflected from them. Belief must perish when its cause becomes perverted or ceases to operate.

By the same principle of interpretation, stars are the knowledges of truth, or particular truths, which give us light. When the age becomes corrupt, they would fall from their places in the heaven of the

mind. When love to the Lord dies out of the heart, and a true belief in Him ceases to shine in the understanding, the lusts of self and the world will drag every heavenly truth from its place in the heaven of the mind down to the dust of the earth. When the love of the Lord and the neighbor perish in any human mind, or in any era in man's history, the powers of the heavens are shaken,—“the heavens depart as a scroll when it is rolled together,” and its stars of spiritual knowledge “fall to the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind.”

I have given but an outline of the meaning of these signs, but enough has been said to indicate the point of view we must gain, and the direction in which we must look for the Second Coming. There is abundant evidence in the past history and present condition of the Christian Church to show that these signs have already appeared, and that the end is long since passed. It was approached gradually and unconsciously to the men of the age, for the very causes which destroyed it rendered them incapable of recognizing the signs of its dissolution and the coming of the Son of man. The Lord came as a thief at night, but not for the purposes of a thief. It was night because men, by their evils of life and false doctrines of religion, had darkened their minds. There was no sun in their heaven, no moon gave them light, and all their stars of spiritual knowledge had fallen to the earth. The Lord came as a thief, without noise, when they were asleep,



and fancied that all their spiritual treasures were secure. They did not watch.

But when we say that the Christian age or world has come to an end, we do not mean the organized societies of the Church, nor that they are destitute of all goodness and truth. On the contrary, they are more numerous and stronger than they ever were in the past. The Jewish age came to an end more than eighteen centuries ago, but the Jewish people are more numerous now than they were then, and they still teach their doctrines and adhere to their principles. And they are vastly more intelligent and elevated in character than they ever were, even in the palmiest days of their power. But their age has passed away. The principles which were the controlling forces in their world, and gave form and quality to it, have ceased to be the standard of right and the guiding light of men. We must not, therefore, confound principle with form. The tree may remain in full form, and preserve its toughness of fibre and peculiar texture of grain, for many years after it is dead. There are remains of all the geologic ages; the kingdoms of the plant and the animal are built upon them. But they have ceased to be the predominant feature of the earth; they do not give character and quality to it. New ages, superior in every form of beauty and every quality of good, have succeeded them, though the old remain and still perform an important use.

So it is with the Christian age. The essential qualities, which distinguished it from all other

phases and grand movements in the progress of humanity, have passed away, and they can never return. Christians may call themselves by the same name, but they are not the same. They may repeat the same creed, but the words do not stand for the same ideas. They have either become a formula devoid of life, like a dead tree, or new meanings have been put into them.

The essential principle of that age was faith, a belief founded on personal authority. The men who were the genuine sons of that age,—who were animated by its spirit and became the embodiment of its life,—accepted the great facts of Christianity with an undoubting faith. They did not care to know the reasons and the hidden causes of things. The great facts that there is another life, that there is a resurrection from death, that there is a heaven of happiness and a hell of misery, and, above all, that Jesus Christ, who is the Redeemer and Saviour of men, is also the Creator of all things, and the supreme object of worship, in whose glorious person dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily, were sufficient for them. They were new and glorious truths, and they laid hold on them with a childlike trust and an abiding affection which supplied every want and filled their whole being.

But that age has passed away. Men can no longer receive truth in that way, and be content with it. The reason has been awakened from its long sleep. Men will seek for causes; they will ask for the grounds of belief; they will compare and investi-

gate, and seek for the relations of cause and effect. They do not care for the authority of men; they will not be content until they find the authority of the truth. The boldest and most advanced are deterred by no consequences. Let truth defend herself, and maintain her authority, they say. If she is unable to do it, she is not the truth. Let the doctrines of the Church be put into the crucible of the reason; let them be subjected to the sharpest questionings of science; and if they cannot stand the test, they are not true. Fire will not harm the pure gold. Let the Sacred Scriptures, and all they teach of heaven and hell and God, be arraigned before the bar of science and the established principles of law, of language, and of order; let them be subjected to the testimony of history and the facts of experience, and let whatever cannot stand this tribulation, this spiritual threshing, be blown away as chaff.

This tendency cannot be arrested. Neither Catholic nor Protestant can effectively exclude the light from the eyes of the people, or the forces of the new age from their hearts. "Every eye shall see Him." The great army of leaders, from Pope to deacon, may exhort men to keep their reason subject to faith, and "only believe," it will have no avail. They are themselves borne along in the same current; they themselves do not believe as the early Christians did. They may seek to terrify the timid by pointing out the dangers of unbelief. There is danger in the exercise of every human faculty.

There is danger in learning to walk; but every one is willing to incur its risks for the freedom and power they gain. It is as impossible to check this tendency, and place man in the mental and spiritual condition of the primitive Christian age, as it would be to change the cultivated intellect and the robust passions of manhood into the sweet innocence and lovely trust of infancy. That state has passed never to return.

The men of the first Christian age also formed their opinions and doctrines from the appearances of truth. This was a necessary consequence of their receiving it by faith. That mental state has also passed away. Men have learned that a correct judgment cannot be formed upon any subject from external phenomena. The senses cannot be trusted even in material things, much less can their testimony be depended upon in the spiritual realm of man's nature. Men have begun to look into causes; they have discovered that all beings and all things are inherently and essentially related. They have learned or are beginning to discover that the sources of power lie within, and the true point of view to gain a true knowledge of the relations and qualities of all forms is from the high places of intelligence and spiritual knowledge. The true centres of power are within, and it is only from them that we can understand the facts of nature or the letter of Scripture. Having gained these positions, or having conceived the possibility of doing so, it is as impossible to ignore this vantage of light and power as it would

be for the modern astronomer to lay aside his telescopes and calculus, desert his observatories, forget his knowledge, and return to the Ptolemaic age of astronomical science.

At the bottom, however, it is not a question of the truth or falsity of the doctrines which formed the character of the first Christian age,—though the doctrines were falsified—but of the special nature of the intellectual and spiritual character of the age itself. No intellectual or spiritual progress is possible while men “only believe,” even if their belief is true. There was no progress in the knowledge of the material world for thousands of years until the age of science was born. There was, indeed, an accumulation of facts, which was a preparation for the new age of science; but no additions to the treasury of facts would have constituted the scientific age, as no accumulation of materials will make a house. No distinct step in intellectual or spiritual progress is possible while men form their doctrines and theories from the letter of nature or of Scripture. That age must, therefore, complete its cycle, as the Jewish age had done, and pass away. As we have seen, its simplicity and childlike faith could not be preserved when the men of the time began to reason. In such conditions error is inevitable, and error leads to sin, and sin, in turn, blinds the understanding, dulls the perceptions, and begets more fatal errors. As the leaf and blossom of the plant contain in their own forms and nature the causes of their decay, so do all ages of human progress, whose

central principle is implicit obedience, or a knowledge of truth based upon appearances only, or a belief founded upon the testimony of others.

These, as we have seen, were the fundamental principles of the first Christian age. They were the root from which it sprung; they gave to it its form and character, and they were the elements of its power and weakness. The end of that world was, therefore, inevitable, and it has come. All the signs which prefigured and attended it have appeared, and have been recorded in the pages of history. That generation has passed, and "all these things have been fulfilled." The Son of man has come in the "clouds of heaven with power and great glory." He has sent His angels with a trumpet and a great voice of a higher form of spiritual truth, and they are gathering together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to another. There is great mourning among the tribes of men of the past age, who can see nothing but the dark and destructive side of this grand event; but there is hope and rejoicing among the few who have watched, and who see the dawning light and feel the quickening breath of a new life, which show that the winter has passed, and that the summer of a new and more fruitful age is nigh.

## LECTURE VI.

### THE MANNER OF THE LORD'S COMING.

“And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”—Matthew xxiv. 30.

IN these words our Lord reveals to us with perfect precision the manner in which He will make His Second Advent. He will come as the Son of Man, in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. Our conceptions of this coming, however, will be determined by the meaning we give to the words “Son of Man,” “clouds,” and “power and glory.” In their natural meaning, they teach us that the Lord is coming in a material body, in the unsubstantial clouds of mist which float a few miles above the surface of our globe, and in physical power and external splendor; that He is coming by an outward, natural way, to do a work differing in kind from a merely human work only in the extent of its power and the terribleness of its destruction.

But if, as we have tried to show, He is coming to a world of thought and affection, then He must come in forms adapted to that world. If He is coming at the end of one age, one complete cycle in human progress, to institute another, these words cannot have a natural meaning. The new age is to be created by new truths; it is to be a new and higher state of human life produced by those truths.



By Son of Man, therefore, we must understand the form in which the Lord comes; by clouds, the means He employs to effect His coming; and by power and great glory, the results of it. And all these forces and forms must be spiritual; they must be of a nature similar to the subjects they are to act upon, and to the ends they are to accomplish.

The only way in which one mind can approach another is by a communication of its affections and thoughts. There may be a personal coming and presence, while there is no approach of thought and affection, which constitute the real man. This accords with common experience and common speech. Two men will meet personally to make a bargain, or to confer upon some subject of interest. If they cannot agree it is common to say, "We did not come near each other." If their views are very wide apart, they express the fact by saying, "We could not get in sight of each other." In the same manner, we speak of people being very near to us, though we may be separated by oceans, and of being distant, though they live in the same house. According to the same law of spiritual relation, the Lord is said to be far off and near to men; to go away from them, and come to them and dwell with them. When the Lord was on earth in person He did not get near to many of its inhabitants; He did not get in sight of the Scribes and Pharisees and of the great body of the Jewish people. They did not know Him. If He were to come in person again, He would get no nearer to men by doing it. He said

to His disciples that it was expedient for them that He should go away, for if He went not away the Comforter could not come to them; plainly teaching that His personal presence was an obstacle to His spiritual presence. It is in accordance with all the laws of the Divine order, and the intellectual and spiritual nature of man, that the Lord, as a Divine Being, cannot really come to men in any other way than by communicating His truth in such a form that they can see it. With this idea of the Lord's coming and of the essential relations between Him and the minds of men, let us examine the words of our text, and try to understand what the Lord Himself says to us in them about the manner of making His Second Advent.

1. I invite your attention to the significance of the term "Son of Man" as our Lord Himself uses it. We find that the Lord is called by various names in the revelation He has made of Himself to man in His Word. He is called Jehovah, God, Jehovah of Hosts, God of Israel, Shaddai, the Rock, Creator, Former, Saviour, and Redeemer. In the New Testament He is called Jesus, Christ, the Lord, God, Son of God, Son of Man, Lamb of God, Prophet, Saviour, Master, and Teacher. All these names refer to the same person, and they are always used with the utmost precision, according to the subject treated. One name can never be substituted for another and express the same idea. This would be as impossible as it would be to substitute one figure for another of a different denom-

ination, in a mathematical problem, and obtain the same answer. The Son of Man and the Son of God are not different persons, but the names express different qualities and relations of the same person, and they are never used interchangeably. When the Lord's divinity, His unity with the Father, His Divine power, Faith in Him, and life from Him are treated of, He calls Himself the Son, and the Son of God.

But He calls Himself the Son of Man when His passion, the Judgment, His coming, and, in general, when redemption, salvation, and regeneration are referred to. He is called the Son of God in relation to His Divine Humanity, and the Son of Man when what He is doing for man, and how He is received by him, and, in general, when His relations to man are referred to. This is clearly seen by reference to those passages in which He speaks of Himself as the Son of Man.

The ground for these different forms of expression lies in the fact that the Lord does not talk at random, calling Himself by different names merely for the sake of variety. Infinite wisdom must use language with infinite precision. As the Lord is Divine truth, and it is by means of the truth that He comes to man, redeems, regenerates, and saves him, He calls Himself by a name which indicates this office, when He is performing it or speaking of it. This is evident from the passages of the Word in which He is called Son of Man.

He is called the Son of man when Judgment is

treated of. For example, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and He will set the sheep on His right hand and the goats on the left" (Matthew xxv. 32, 33). "The Son of man will come in the glory of His Father, and then He will render to every one according to his works" (Matthew xix. 28). "Watch ye, therefore, always, that ye may be accounted worthy to stand before the Son of man" (Luke xxi. 36). "The Father judgeth no one, but hath committed all judgment to the Son: because He is the Son of man" (John v. 22, 27). Here is an instance of the absolute precision with which words are used in the Sacred Scriptures. All judgment is executed by Divine truth. This the Lord Himself declares when He says, "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world. The word that I have spoken, that will judge him in the last day" (John xii. 47, 48). Again: "God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth in Him is not judged; but he that believeth not in Him is judged already." Here it is plainly declared that all judgment is committed to the Son, because He is the Son of Man, and that He as a Person judges no one; it is the truth that judges; and He is called the Son of Man when He exercises the office of communicating truth to men, plainly showing that the Judgment is not to be effected by a personal coming, but by a clear manifestation of Divine truth.

The principle that all judgment is effected by the truth applies to civil as well as to spiritual affairs. In all cases where man is under law, it is the law that condemns or acquits, and not any person. The judge merely pronounces the sentence of the law; he is only the instrument of the law, its spokesman. If a man violates a physical law, there is no need for a personal judge to pronounce sentence, or of an officer to execute it. The law does both. If I put my hand in the fire, or break my bones, or swallow poison, the violated law of my physical nature pronounces the sentence and executes the penalty. In the same manner, all Divine laws, and all the laws of man's spiritual nature, need no judge or jury or executor. The law itself,—"the words I speak unto you,"—they shall judge you in the last day.

The Lord is also called the Son of Man when His coming is described, and for the same reason as when the judgment is spoken of, because He comes to us through the medium of Divine truth: "Then will appear the sign of the Son of man." "They will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." In Daniel it is said, "I saw, and, behold, with the clouds of heaven the Son of man coming." In Revelation, "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him." The Lord Himself said to the high-priest, who asked Him if He was the Son of God, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven."

When the Lord performs other offices for man He calls Himself the Son of Man, as when He is betrayed and suffers. It was only the human nature which He assumed, and had not glorified, that could suffer. It was that side of His nature which was related to man, that form of the Divine truth which was adapted to the comprehension, the reception, or the rejection of men. Consequently, we find Him saying, "The Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief-priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death." "The Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many." "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man." Many other passages might be adduced to the same effect. But enough have been quoted to show, beyond a doubt, that the phrase "Son of Man," means the Lord as the Word, as Divine truth, accommodated to men, coming to them to judge, to redeem, to reform, to regenerate, and to save, as it is received, or rejected. A personal coming could produce no other results.

2. Having thus ascertained the meaning of the terms by which the Lord is known in His coming, let us proceed to examine the manner of it. If the Lord comes to man as the Divine truth, what are we to understand by His coming in the clouds of heaven?

Clouds are a form of water. The letter of the Sacred Scriptures is the vehicle by which the Lord communicates His truth to men. The clouds of heaven are the natural representative of the letter

of the Word. By the Lord's coming in the clouds of heaven is meant, therefore, a revelation of spiritual and Divine truth embodied in the letter of the Word. The literal sense is Divine truth clothed in natural language, in imagery derived from the material world, in bodily actions, in history, biography, parable, and miracle. The letter is not Divine truth itself. The history of the Jews is not Divine truth, as bodily actions and speech are not thought and affection. Their history is used to embody and convey Divine truth, as natural speech and physical action are employed to express human thought and affection. The Word in its letter is to Divine truth as clouds to the sun. As the clouds originate in the earth, so the letter of Revelation originated with man, in the states and conditions of the human mind, and, consequently, Divine truth was presented to man in a form adapted to his wants. The letter intercepts, modifies, refracts, and transmits the rays of Divine truth, as the natural clouds intercept, modify, and transmit the light of the sun. Divine truth is in the letter, as science is in the various forms of material substances,—as the science of botany is in plants, or physiology in the human body.

The material clouds are not suitable vehicles for communicating spiritual truths. But they can represent them, even if they cannot become them, and we find that water in every form is employed in the Word as the exponent of truth. This is so evident in many places that every enlightened mind can



see it. The conversation of our Lord with the Samaritan woman at the well is a case in point. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 13, 14). The river of life, also, whose waters make everything live whithersoever they come, and which issue out of the throne of God, must be Divine truth. But these are not exceptional cases. The meaning is universal, whether the water is in the form of seas, or rivers, or clouds, or rain, or dew, or whatever may be its use.

Whenever it is recorded in the Old Testament that the Lord came to man to communicate His truth to him, and to lead him, He is generally represented as being encompassed in a cloud, as coming in a cloud. The Children of Israel were led through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud. When they were pursued by the Egyptians, the pillar of cloud came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel,—beautifully representing the manner in which the Divine truth of the Word gives light to those who receive it and obey it, while it is clouds and darkness to those who reject it and live in evil.

When the Lord was about to give the law,—that embodiment of Divine truth,—He appeared to Moses in a cloud. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come to thee in a thick cloud, that the people may

hear thee when I speak with thee, and believe thee forever" (Exodus xix. 9). "And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days" (Exodus xxiv. 15, 16). Why did the Lord surround Himself with this cloud? It could not be to excite terror, for there is nothing in a cloud peculiarly calculated to do that. Was it not that He might veil the glory of His Divine nature, and be able to draw near to the Israelites and not consume them? Was it not that He might come to them in a form adapted to their low condition, and in so doing represent the manner in which He will always come to men?

After the tables of the law were placed in the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. At two different times, afterwards, the Lord is said to descend in a cloud and talk with Moses.

When Solomon had completed the temple, a cloud filled the house of the Lord so that the priests could not stand and officiate. In Isaiah (iv. 5) it is said, "The Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence."

In these and in many other passages of Scripture you will see the Lord comes to man, speaks to him, gives His law to him in clouds. A voice comes

out of the clouds at the transfiguration. It is impossible for man to receive the truth in its highest form in unclouded brightness. Its glory must be veiled, and adapted to his state. The Lord must come to us in a cloud.

There is another class of passages, in which clouds are mentioned, that show conclusively that the material clouds cannot be meant by them. In Isaiah it is said, "Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud." This, of course, cannot be literally true. Is it a vague expression without any meaning? That way of revealing truth would not be worthy of infinite wisdom. If by cloud is meant the letter of the Word, it has a meaning consistent with our interpretation and its use in every other passage. To ride upon a cloud would be a mode of coming to man in His truth. Again, it is said, "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens, and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds." "For Thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and Thy truth unto the clouds." "Ascribe ye excellency unto God; His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds." In these passages the Lord's faithfulness, truth, and strength are said to extend to, and to be in, the clouds. In their literal import these expressions convey no intelligible idea whatever. But if clouds denote the letter of the Word, the natural forms in which the Lord expresses spiritual truth, they state plain and credible facts. They reveal the comforting truth that the Lord's faithfulness in coming to man, in revealing His truth to

him, extends to the Word in its very letter,—that His truth is in it, and there can be no unmeaning phrases in it. Especially is it true that the Lord's strength, the power of His Divine truth in its application to man, is in the letter, for it reaches him there.

Time will not permit me to enter further into the particular and peculiar way in which clouds are employed in the Sacred Scriptures. But if we were to take up their use and nature in every respect, we should find the evidence constantly accumulating that water in every form will bear the meaning of truth; and that, by giving it this meaning, a world of significance will be found in many passages of the Word, which, in their merely literal sense, convey no spiritual or Divine idea to the mind. In whatever aspect we view the subject of clouds, we find them to be the vehicles of that Divine truth which is represented by the Son of Man. They are the chariots of the Lord, in which He comes to man in the power and glory of His Divine truth.

By the aid of this key to the interpretation of Scripture, which unlocks the meaning of every passage in which clouds occur, we can see why the Lord is represented as coming in clouds, as surrounded with clouds. They are the natural representative of the letter of the Word, by means of which He comes to man in His Divine truth. They represent a lower form of the same truth expressed by the Son of Man. There is the same fitness in this correspondence that there is between the natural

actions and the thoughts of men. We come to one another by means of these actions and expressions. The men of one age come to men in all ages and places by their writings. Plato and Homer and Milton and Shakspeare come to us in this way. Every man and woman who has expressed a true thought or pure affection is coming, and will continue to come to others as long as literature shall endure.

Whether this principle be true or not, it accounts for all the facts, and gives a beautiful and profound spiritual meaning to many passages of the Word, which, in the letter, have no meaning, and it presents the most cogent reasons for the forms in which the Lord has come to man, for which there seemed to be no grounds in the Divine or in human nature.

But it may be objected, "Does not this interpretation explain away the meaning and destroy the force of those passages which predict His coming? Is this a real coming with power and great glory? Is it as real a coming, and as well adapted to secure the purposes of the Lord in the creation and salvation of man, as a Personal Advent would be?" There is abundant evidence that it is a much more real and powerful coming, and much better calculated to effect the subjection of all men to the dominion of truth and love, than a personal coming could be.

We have, indeed, the best of evidence that there is no special power in a personal advent to secure obedience to the Divine will. The Lord once came in person, and very few believed on Him,—His own

nation rejected and crucified Him. It is true, we may conceive of His coming with more power and glory; but instead of accomplishing His purposes to bring all men into obedience to Him, such a manifestation would defeat it. A man is not brought into obedience by killing him. His heart is not won by terror, or his understanding enlightened by physical commotion. We must not forget the nature of the human mind. Omnipotent power cannot force into the human mind what it cannot receive. It cannot compel a man to love. Man may be terrified, blasted, consumed, but that does not regenerate, and save, and fit him for heaven.

But let us examine the nature of true power and glory, and see if the clear manifestation of the Divine truth, which, we have endeavored to show, will constitute the Second Coming, does not comprise all real power, and must not promote to the fullest extent the true glory of the Lord.

1. What is power, and how is it manifested in its greatest fulness? Our ideas of power may be very natural, superficial, and imperfect. We are in danger of taking too material a view of the subject. We may measure power too much by the physical changes, the noise and commotion attending it. We look at Niagara, and we are awed by the irresistible force of the swift and terrific plunge of waters. But there is no more power in the fall than there is in the force which holds the peaceful lake sleeping in its bed in the bosom of the hills. If the fall is irresistible, what must be the extent of

that power which drew this mighty current of water up from ocean and land? We read of earthquakes and volcanoes that shake the solid earth and bury cities in ruins, but what is the power which causes such ruin compared with the forces which hold the earth together? which bind with invisible bands the particles of the diamond and steel together? We read of hurricanes so tremendous in their force that they lift large bodies into the air, topple down houses, and sweep the giant trees of the forest before them as the mower's scythe the grass. But who thinks of the power which holds all material bodies to the earth, which lifts the forests and clouds above it, in opposition to the force of gravity? There is more power exerted in one summer's day, in the growing grass, in weaving the leaf, opening the blossom, and ripening the harvests, than all the animal and mechanical force man ever applied to use.

But let us go a step farther, and think of the power which moves the planets in their orbits, which creates and keeps in perpetual play the countless suns and systems of suns in the material universe. Here is no hurry, no bustle, no noise, no agony of effort. Every planet and sun moves smoothly and silently on its way. Here we see an exhibition of true power in the material universe.

Is there not a much fuller and nobler manifestation of power in the creation and preservation of this world than there would be in its destruction? Suppose that those descriptions of great physical commotions which, it is said, will attend the Second



Coming were literally true? Suppose there were rending rocks, and opening graves, and falling stars, a general tumult and terror among the nations, a universal conflagration in which the heavens were rolled together as a scroll, and the whole material universe rushed to ruin, would that be so great an exhibition of power as we see before us, every day, in the preservation and orderly movements of all this grand and beautiful creation? Reason and common sense can return but one answer to this question.

We are liable to the same mistake in our estimate of civil, intellectual, and moral power. We associate with it restraint, resistance, violence; we measure it too much by the noise and tumult caused by it. We think of kings governing a powerful nation, leading armies to battle, or moving vast multitudes of men to noble or shameful deeds, according to their will. We are too sensuous in our measure of power. We are too prone to take Alexander and Cæsar and Napoleon as types of power and human greatness.

But, in the moral as well as in the spiritual world, true power is quiet and noiseless in its operations. There is more power in an idea than in all the muscles and bayonets and rifled cannon in the world. Plato and Socrates were the embodiments of a greater force, and have exerted more influence upon the world, than all the warriors of Greece and Rome. Shakspeare has moved more hearts, lifted more burdens for the weary sons of toil, and exerted

more real power over men than all the kings and heroes on the roll of English fame. James Watt has done more to enrich and give power to England and to the world than all her kings and princes and titled nobility. True power lives, grows, extends, and multiplies itself. There is more power in a live acorn than in a forest of dead oaks.

But what is the embodiment of the greatest and most beneficent power in this world? What has done the most to restrain the lusts of men? to civilize and enlighten humanity? What has quickened the human mind, stimulated invention, extended the domain of science, by which man has gained control over the material world, and penetrated the secrets of its most powerful forces? Where is the centre and source of that mighty power which, like vernal heat, is penetrating every mind and quickening every human faculty? What is the strongest thing in this world? Here it is. It is the Bible. Much as it has been misunderstood, superficially as it has been known, greatly as its truths have been perverted, it has still been the largest embodiment of power in humanity. It has caused the difference between the first and the nineteenth centuries. Its truths are higher and purer than those contained in any other book; they appeal to principles, they move to action profounder deeps in the human heart. They are more widely diffused; they penetrate and imbue literature. Every book is pure and useful in the degree it embodies the principles contained in the

Sermon on the Mount. They come in contact with more minds, and wherever they go they heal, they quicken, they save, like that pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. I repeat it. The Bible is the embodiment of the greatest power in the world.

If such has been and still is its power, imperfectly and superficially as it has been understood, what may we not rationally hope will be the effect of its Divine truths when they break forth from the letter as the sun from the clouds! The Bible is Divine truth itself. It contains all the principles of the Divine nature, all the laws of the Divine order, and, consequently, as man was made in the likeness and image of God, it embodies all the principles of man's nature, all the possibilities of his being, and the sure methods of unfolding them. The letter is to the truth itself, as the thick cloud which encompassed Sinai was to the majestic and glorious presence of Him who gave the law, and whose face they could not behold and live. Men have mistaken the cloud, illumined by the few rays of truth which struggled through it, for the sun in the heavens above it. If these few rays, refracted, perverted, and obstructed, as they have been by human ignorance and folly, have done so much to vivify and guide human power to noble ends, what must be the result when the true laws of man's nature are discovered and obeyed? when the mysteries of life are revealed and its enigmas solved? By the opening of the spiritual or genuine sense of

the Word, the Son of Man—the Divine truth in its human form and relations—is coming to men to reveal to them their own spiritual nature, the reality and nature of the spiritual world, which has been but little more than a name to men; to show them in clear light the nature of life, of death, of heaven and hell, of the relations of the life in this world to the eternal life in the spiritual world. It is coming to do this in a light so clear that men cannot only say we believe, but we know their truth; and it is coming with an authority which is the voice of God Himself. Can any one conceive that the Lord could come in any greater power to accomplish the purposes of His infinite love? A personal coming, even if attended with all the flaming splendors and terrific convulsions usually associated with it, would not compare in power with the silent, unobtrusive, all-pervading, omnipresent influence of such a manifestation of the truth. Truth is power everywhere, in every form. Look over the civilized world, and see what miracles the truths of natural science have wrought. In these miracles we have a perfect example of the power of Divine truth, to regenerate and save men, when it shall find a rational lodgment in the human mind.

Let us observe, also, that this idea of power is perfectly in harmony with the interpretation of the clouds, and the Son of Man. It is, indeed, the effect of the Divine truth coming in the clouds of heaven, the letter of the Word.

2. But the Lord is also coming with “great

glory." What is the true idea of glory, especially when applied to the Lord? Is it not too often regarded as the pomp and splendor of power? Is it not associated with exulting hosts of angels, with magnificence of attire and majesty of presence? Is it true glory to dazzle, to terrify, to subjugate, to destroy? Especially, can we conceive it to be compatible with the Divine glory to make a display of power to such poor, blind worms as we are? True glory, even among men, is not sensuous display. The glory of a king is not the regal splendors of his court. It does not consist in purple and gold, but in the wisdom with which he rules.

Suppose the Lord should come with myriads of angels; that the heavens were filled with the splendors of His presence; that the earth shook, and all faces gathered blackness; that his enemies trembled and fled, and cried to the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from His awful presence; and that the whole material universe was dissolved! Would that be as glorious as to preserve all these worlds, to clear away the obstructions to the reception of His love, to plant new truths in the hearts of men, to save the lost, restore the fallen, multiply human souls, and fill them with blessedness?

But it is not in this sense that the word glory is used here. The Lord does not seek glory of men. When He asked that His name might be glorified, He did not seek renown or any earthly honor. By glory is meant the Divine truth as it is manifested

in heaven. As that truth is received in the understanding it enlightens and exalts. It impresses the Divine likeness upon man. Man's true glory consists in the reception of the Divine truth, and in a life according to it. The Lord comes to man in glory just to the extent that He comes in the truth, and He comes to man and teaches him by means of the Sacred Scriptures.

Thus it is that He is coming in the clouds of heaven, and that He will continue to come with increasing power and glory, until His Divine truth illuminates every understanding, and His love glows in every heart. He is coming, and will continue to come until all science and art and literature shall be devoted to heavenly purposes, and every form of human industry shall be imbued and ennobled with a heavenly spirit. He is coming, and He will continue to come until love to God and man become the ruling motive of human action in business, in society, in church and state; until every home shall become a little heaven upon the earth, the nursery of angels, and the scene of their oft-repeated and welcome presence. Then will this in truth become a new earth, and a new heaven will embosom and shine over it.

If there was time to take a wider view of the subject, to examine a greater amount of Divine testimony, and to enter more into detail in the bearings of collateral subjects which are intimately related to it, we should find the truth we have endeavored to state confirmed at every step. But

enough has been said to show that the doctrine, which teaches that the Second Coming of the Lord consists in a new and fuller revelation of Divine truth through the opening of the spiritual meaning of the Word, is eminently rational, and fully in accordance with Scripture when correctly understood; that it accords with all the known methods of the Divine operations, and, in whatever aspect viewed, is in harmony with the ends of the Divine love in the creation of man, and the methods of infinite wisdom in accomplishing them.

It is a great theme; it has many aspects, and is wide-sweeping in its consequences. It involves the profoundest principles of human knowledge, and the most intimate relations of the Lord and man. But if we have found the genuine truth in relation to the subject, it will grow clearer the more fully we examine it. Every new aspect in which we can view it, will add to its brightness; every step we take in investigating it, the way must grow plainer. All truth, natural, spiritual, and Divine, is in harmony. There is no collision in Divine laws. If it be true that the Lord is coming in a clear showing of the Divine truth embodied in the Sacred Scriptures, to regenerate and save humanity, and to establish His kingdom on the earth, we shall see proofs of it in human history. If we watch, as He has commanded us, we shall see Him in His power and glory in everything around us.



## LECTURE VII.

### THE POWER OF THE SECOND COMING : ITS ORIGIN AND OPERATION.

“Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth : for He shall not speak of Himself ; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak : and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me : for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you.”—John xvi. 13, 14.

It was the purpose of my last lecture to show by the testimony of the Scriptures themselves, and by the essential nature of power and glory, that the Lord effects His Second Coming by revealing to men a clearer knowledge of Himself, and of man's nature and relations to Him, by means of His Word. “The Spirit of truth” will “testify of Him,” and will “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment,” and “will lead men into all truth.” New truth is to break out from the letter of the Word as light from the parting clouds, and this truth is the embodiment of the new forces which are to raise the dead, execute the judgment, and create the new heavens and the new earth.

But it is essential to a clear and rational knowledge of the subject that we should understand what this power is, how it reaches man through the Scriptures, and produces its grand effects. There is a vague idea floating through the minds of intelligent

men that a new and clearer light is about to break in upon the mental world, and disperse the darkness of the past, upon the most vital problems of human life. Some think they see the morning of the new age breaking upon the mountains, and feel the quickening of a new life in their own hearts, and see the stir of a new power in the body of humanity. "They hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." Many are crying, "Watchman, what of the night?" and the sum of the answers of all the voices is, "The morning cometh, and also the night." A direct and satisfactory answer is not possible without a correct knowledge of the constant source of all power, and the agency of truth in its application to human minds. This, therefore, is the first subject which demands our attention.

All power is from the Lord and is His power. The omnipotence of the Lord means much more than that He possesses the power to do everything He pleases. It has a deeper significance than that He is mightier than all other beings. It means that there is no power of any kind or degree, from the lowest to the highest, but His power. The so-called forces of nature are His. He draws the particles of matter together with greater or less force, forming the endless variety of solids and liquids; He sustains and moves the worlds in their orbits; He causes the grass to grow, and covers the valleys with harvests; He crowns the hills with forests; He lifts the ocean into the air, and spreads the

clouds over the mountains. The dead mould has no power in itself to organize the plant; the seed has no inherent energy to select from the earth the materials for leaves, blossoms, and fruit; the stone cannot rise or fall of itself; animals cannot live or die by any power of their own. Man has no unde-rived ability to think, or feel, or perform the small-est act. All his physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual power is the Lord's power acting in and upon him. It is a universal and immutable truth, that all power belongs to God.

Power, also, is constantly given: it acts without any remission. It is a stream constantly flowing from its exhaustless fountain. It cannot be given and continue to operate when severed from its origin. The Lord did not create the material uni-verse, and endow it with a certain measure of power, make it over to the control of certain laws, and then withdraw His hand, interposing only in special emergencies. It is a perpetual creation. It is an unremitting stream,—a fresh cast from His hand every moment. We find in light a perfect and familiar example of the Divine method of creating and of communicating power and life. The cause which produces light must constantly act. The light which flows from a luminous body does not remain when the body itself ceases to shine. Turn off the gas, and the room is instantly dark; the light which is in it does not remain. Darken the sun, and we darken the moon and all the planets. The light which is in the world disappears.

The same result would take place with everything, however solid and constant it appears to be, if the creating cause were removed. Cut off the hardest rock or the most tenacious metal from the creating forces which flow into them and become them, and they would vanish from the earth as suddenly as the light from a room when the luminous body is extinguished. The earth, the sun, and the material universe itself, and every created existence would vanish away in a moment, if the Lord should remove the hand of His power from them. The tendency of science to resolve matter into one substance, and that substance into force, is in the right direction. "Sustentation is perpetual creation." But while it is true that all power is the Lord's, it is also true that it is given with a generous heart and a lavish hand to all beings and things to have and to hold and to use as their own. It comes by such secret ways and noiseless forms that the inflow of its currents is not noticed. It seems to be underived, innate, spontaneous, and our own, while in truth it is a constant gift of the Lord.

But the manner in which the powers of life are given and received has its order and laws. The amount of power and the kind of power received will depend upon the form and capacity and adjustment of the recipient form to the influent force. As the amount of heat and light a plant can receive from the sun depends upon its nature, form, aspect, and orderly relations to it, so the amount of life any human being can receive from the Lord depends

upon the same conditions. The stone cannot feel and grow because it has no forms for the reception of the power which gives sensation and appropriates sustenance. The plant cannot see, and hear, and feel, because it has no organic vessels capable of receiving the forces which give that power. The animal cannot remember ideas, and reason from abstract knowledge, because it is not endowed with the spiritual organism which is capable of receiving power in those forms. The Lord cannot come to the blind man in light, or to the deaf in harmonies, because they have no rooms to receive Him in that way,—there is no line of communication opened between man and the Lord in that direction.

We recognize this law in all natural things, and act according to it. The mechanic does not expect that any wheel will turn unless it is connected with the moving power. He knows that the work which a tool will do depends upon its form and quality, the skill of the hand, or the mechanism of the wheels and levers which guide it. The farmer does not gather wheat when he plants corn. The seeds he sows are the vessels with which He goes to the Lord for the power of sustaining life, and the means of happiness, and he expects to get the power and substance which those vessels will hold. He knows that each seed can only hold its own kind. Wheat will bring him wheat; corn will return to him corn; the grape will come loaded with clusters of its own kind. So it is in all cases: we get of the same kind we give. We receive from the infinite fountain of

life the highest and best powers which the vessels we take to it will contain. A tin cup will not hold a thought; we cannot bring home heavenly affections in a basket. The memory is the only vessel which will hold ideas. Truths are the vessels, and the only vessels, which will contain intellectual and spiritual forces.

This brings us to the point from which we can see the bearing of these principles upon our subject. The Lord is coming to execute judgment, and to create a new Age of spiritual life and happiness by means of His Word. He is the constant source of all power; He is the only power. Man gets power—becomes power—in the degree he can receive it. His capacity of reception is the absolute measure of the quantity and the quality of the life he receives and becomes. Life is only another name for power. Life is a Divine and substantial force, constantly emanating from the Lord, by which all things are created and sustained. Truths, when viewed in their essential nature, are the vessels which can receive these forces in their intellectual and spiritual forms, and become their repositories in us. The Word is Divine truth; it is capable, therefore, of containing and communicating a Divine life to men. Truth is the way, the path by which the Divine life comes to the soul.

But we must not leave this point in the obscurity of figure; we must try to see precisely what the office of truth is. If we fail in this, we shall not understand how the Lord is coming in the power

and glory of His Word to perform the miracles He has foretold. Strictly speaking, truth is not the power itself, but the means by which we get it. It shows us how to put ourselves in the right aspect towards it, so that its forces can operate directly upon us. Truth is the law of the Divine order; it is the method of the Divine operation. When we know it, therefore, we know how we stand related to the Lord; we know what we must do to get life from Him. This is as true in the natural as in the spiritual realm of the creation. Let us look at some examples.

There is a natural force—which is only another name for a Divine force in nature—which men call gravity. By means of it all bodies are drawn towards one another. Water is held to the earth, and drawn on in a current down every precipice and declining plain. Seeing this, man erects barriers which it must overleap. He turns it from its course and adjusts a revolving wheel to its current, which it sets in motion. He connects machinery with this wheel in such a manner that, by its revolutions, it saws his logs, and spins his wool, and weaves his cloth, and renders him much useful service. But there is no power in the wheel, none in the machinery nor in the water. The power is the Lord's, by which He draws all to each, and each to all, and keeps the creation in order. It is not a power given to the earth at its creation and left in it. It is constantly arriving from Him,—constantly exerted. All that man does is to make the proper



adjustments to convey the power in the right forms and order to produce the desired effects. The steam-engine is another example in point. In these cases, and in all others in which man employs the forces of nature, which are the forces of God, to do his work, he simply adjusts himself to the power in such a way that it can work for him to do the specific service he desires to accomplish. He is enabled to make these adjustments by means of the truth. He has learned the laws of mechanics, the relations of one material substance to another, the composition of matter, its likes and dislikes, and its modes of action. By the aid of these truths, he has brought a power, playing in the idle stream or sleeping in its crystal waters, into his service, and taught it to do a specific work. It feeds him and clothes him, builds his habitations, gives wings to his feet, and brings the products of all climes to his door.

The importance of clearly understanding man's relations to the source of all power will justify another illustration, familiar to all, which we find in the cultivation of the ground. Man has no power to create a seed or to make it grow. His agency consists wholly in adjustments, and his ability to make these will be measured by his knowledge of the nature of the substances and the forces which play a part in the growth of every plant. Here we can see with perfect clearness what truth does for man. The wise agriculturist will not plant his corn upon the rocks; he will not sow his wheat on the

ice ; he will not plant his vines and his orchards in the dense forest. He will not try to cultivate the tender plants of a tropical zone in the regions of frost. There would be no proper adjustment of means to ends, of nature to force. He would, therefore, act directly the reverse of the unwise course. He would study the nature of soils ; he would learn what plants would find them the most congenial ; he would employ the best methods of preparing and enriching them ; he would consult the best conditions of heat and moisture, the proper time for planting, the best modes of culture, and, as far as possible, he would bring into his service the whole science of agriculture. But all that man has learned, or ever will learn, of this science gives him no other power than simply that of adjustment, and of providing the best conditions for growth, so that the Divine forces can operate upon the vegetable forms in the seed with the most direct and effective energy. This is a law of the Divine order in every realm of the creation. Paul may plant, and Apollos water ; but God gives the increase.

Man has the power of learning truth about natural and spiritual things,—he has it because the Lord gives it to him,—and all the truth which man learns relates wholly to the methods of making the best adjustments to the Divine power to secure its most direct and ample reception. For this is what we need. No growth, no progress is possible in natural or spiritual life without Divine assistance. The more fully we can receive and appropriate the Divine

power, the higher we shall rise, and the greater blessedness we shall enjoy. The Lord has embodied and revealed natural truth in the substances and forms of nature. He has revealed spiritual truth to us in His Word. In both cases alike, the truth comes to us in appearances. It could be given in no other way. We must look within, to law and the harmonies of universal principles, if we desire to know how to bring ourselves into such relations to the source of all power that it can operate upon us the most effectively and for our highest good.

Having seen how the law operates on the natural plane of life, how it promotes human progress, how it has taken man from a barbarous age and carried him on, from one step to another, until he lives in a new world, is served by new forces, and finds his means of happiness vastly multiplied, let us see how it operates on the spiritual plane of his being. The Lord comes to man and works for him in nature just in the degree man makes the proper adjustments. Let us try to understand how He comes in higher forms to our spiritual natures. He is coming as the Spirit of truth to guide us into all truth, and in that way to show us what belongs to the Lord. In the words of our Lord, "He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." "He will guide us into all truth" concerning the Lord and our relations to Him. He will show us how we stand related to the Source of life; He will teach us what we must do, and how to do it, to so adjust our spiritual natures to the Divine power that it can

flow into us in the largest and most precious forms. We want power to overcome evil, to dispel ignorance, to purify the heart, to enlighten the understanding, to raise to life the dead spiritual affections, and to invigorate all our highest and noblest faculties by bringing them into orderly relations and intimate conjunction with the Fountain of Life, so that all its streams can flow into us, and become in us a fountain of water springing up into the life of the new age. We want to be genuine branches of the true Vine, and so intimately conjoined to it that its life can flow into us in full creative tides.

This adjustment of our nature to the Divine forces can only be effected by means of the truth. Truth shows us how to do it, in the same way that natural truth shows the mechanic and the farmer how to adjust himself to the Divine forces in natural forms to accomplish natural effects. The principle is the same, the only difference being that one is on a higher plane of life than the other.

It is evident that a true knowledge of God is essential in this adjustment. Any misconception of His nature and relations to men will enter into and mar every method we employ to approach Him and to come into communion with Him. If we regard Him as an arbitrary, wrathful, and implacable Being, we shall cower before Him in fear, or submit with sullen indifference to His fury, or implore Him to restrain His resentments. If we obey His commandments it will be in the spirit of slaves, and not from the love of doing His will, or from the

knowledge that they are the laws of spiritual life, the forms of His love, and the only paths of access to Him. If men think the hindrances to their salvation are in God, and all that is necessary to escape from hell and secure heaven is to induce Him to withhold His wrath and exercise mercy, their efforts will take a very different form from what they would if they believed that He is mercy and goodness itself, and that the only difficulties in the way of coming into entire harmony with Him existed in themselves.

If we regard God as existing in three Persons, among whom the Divine attributes are divided,—one of whom is the embodiment of creative power and inflexible justice, the other of love and compassionate tenderness, and the third the willing and powerful servant of the other two,—the mind will be constantly perplexed to know how to think of the three as one, and how to come into intimate conjunction with those whose characters and relations to men are so diverse. If we try to conceive of God as an infinite and formless Spirit, we put Him at once beyond the reach of human thought, and render any knowledge of the necessary modes of adaptation to His nature and conjunction with Him impossible. We cannot adapt ourselves to unknown conditions; we cannot come into communion with the inconceivable. To attempt it is as absurd as it would be to construct a machine to be propelled by a force of whose laws and nature we were totally ignorant. Any misconception of the Lord's character and

relations to men must enter into all human motives and purposes, and qualify and hinder every effort to come into union with Him.

A true knowledge of man's own nature is equally essential to such an ordering of his faculties that life may flow freely into them from its only source. Our faculties are the instruments we use; they are the subjects which the Divine forces enter, and the field in which they display their effects. Ignorance of their nature, capacity, and laws of development will be a constant hindrance to their action. If a man regards his spirit as a formless essence or a vital force of which he can gain no other conception than of its existence, how can he control, guide, and develop its faculties? If it has no laws, no modes of action, no ascertained relations, what can a man do to bring himself into orderly relations to the Source of life? The ignorance and false notions concerning man's spiritual nature, and the denial of its existence as a substantial and organized form subject to all the laws of organization, have constantly misled him with regard to his own agency in his salvation and spiritual development, and the means necessary to effect them. He has either denied a distinct spiritual existence, or has thought of it only under material conditions. Consequently, he has mistaken the plainest directions the Lord has given him for the development of his spiritual faculties and the attainment of heavenly life. He gives a material meaning to flesh and blood, to eating and drinking, to coming and going, to rising and falling,

to far and near, to great and small, and to all spiritual and Divine activities and relations, and the result is inaction, or constant error, and aimless and fruitless efforts.

All man's spiritual life and power are a constant gift from the Lord. The amount of power and the quality of life received depend upon the capacity and quality of the recipient forms, and those faculties are under human control. They are subject to us in the same manner that our natural faculties are. Their proper use and disposition for the reception of the influent life is our part of the work in their development, and in the attainment of the highest good. But how absurd to suppose we can do this work well unless we acknowledge their existence, understand their nature, and possess a true knowledge of the right means to use! It is as absurd as would be the attempt to construct a telegraph without any other knowledge of electricity than its existence as a force, or of the power of material substances to conduct it.

We see, therefore, that three things are essential to a free and full communication of spiritual power and life from the source of it to the recipients of it, namely, a true knowledge of God, a true knowledge of man, and a true knowledge of the means by which the power is transmitted. The Sacred Scriptures were given to us to supply these three wants, and they were given to us in the form best adapted to secure these ends. These means must necessarily be adapted to human conditions. The chain of in-



strumentalities must come down to the lowest states of man's mental condition; they must come down even to his material senses. But in so doing they become subject to the peril of being misunderstood and rejected. Divine truth, which is the means of communication between the Source of life and its recipients, must come to man under the guise of appearances, for the senses cannot take cognizance of truth in any other way. They can only perceive the appearances of even material forms and relations. Consequently, the reports they bring us of things without us or within us must be subject to constant rectification. All that the senses can tell us about the worlds which fill the universe is that they are points of light. They tell us that the earth is at rest and the largest body in the universe, and that suns and systems of suns are revolving around. We look down a long line of railway, and the senses declare that the rails continually approach until they meet. The wind is the highest conception they can gain of spirit; and the blowing of it, of the movements of the spirit; the cleansing of the body with water is the only notion they can gain of the purification of the spirit by means of the truth. Warmth is their report of the nature of love, and fire, of anger. The senses do the best they can. They bring us the materials of knowledge in such forms as lie within their power.

The Sacred Scriptures, in the letter, are the report of the senses concerning God, and man, and their relations to one another. They must, there-

fore, be subject to rectification in order to get the genuine truth. They tell us that God is angry with men, or that He loves them with an infinite and unchanging affection; that He goes and comes, and yet is everywhere present; that He exists as one personal being, and yet that He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and so on indefinitely, their report always being according to the appearance to them. The senses have no memory, and no reason. They report what they see, and hear, and feel. They do not look before or after; they do not arrange or compare; they simply report according to their nature and capacity. They are invaluable servants; we could make no progress without them; but they are fallacious guides, and the most fickle and cruel masters.

Such are the forms and conditions under which the Lord reveals Himself to us, instructs us concerning our own nature, and teaches us how to so adjust ourselves to the order and power and flow of His forces that we can come into conjunction with Him, and receive life from Him in the highest finite forms and in ever-increasing fulness. Our spiritual growth, therefore, will depend upon the correctness of our knowledge of these laws of the Divine order, and upon our obedience to them. A man or a people who have no knowledge of Revelation must depend upon instincts, upon traditions, and such dim light as can be gained by experience. There can be no progress under such conditions, because there are no means of getting new power,

there are no new aspects or larger openings of the human mind for the reception of increased life. A people in this state are like a tree which has attained its maturity.

There may be a hereditary belief in Revelation without any desire or effort to understand what is revealed. There can be no progress in that state. There is nothing in such a belief to bring men into such relations to the Lord that He can communicate more life to them. Their highest faculties are asleep; they can do no more than go the narrow round of life,—never enlarging it, or getting the refreshment of new power. Consequently, we find that the nations which have no revelation remain stationary from century to century.

A people may have an intense belief in the Sacred Scriptures, but limited wholly to their natural meaning. Such was the mental condition of the Jews. On the plane of their thought they were the most literal and bigoted believers; but their knowledge did not rise to the spiritual plane of their natures, and form a connection between them and the Lord in that degree of life. Their conscious relations to the Lord were external, governmental, and, for the most part, arbitrary like those of a subject to any sovereign. Consequently, they could receive life only in low and feeble forms, even when they were in the most orderly state. If they had lived up to the requirements of the law as they understood it; if they had remained scrupulous in the performance of every ritual, and had become perfect Jews,

their attainments in spiritual progress would have been comparative, small, and limited to a low plane of action.

Men may take a distinct step beyond the Jewish age, as the early Christians did; they may regard the Bible as a revelation of spiritual and Divine truth; they may revere it as the Word of God, and see many glorious and helpful spiritual truths in it, which they accept and believe and seek to regulate their lives by. By these means they come into truer and more intimate relations with the Lord; they receive life from Him in large measures, they "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." They take those parts of the Word in which the letter and spirit coincide, and they come into a new mental state. They live in a new world, and a new sun shines upon them.

But if they receive these truths by faith, and still remain in the letter, they will fall into doubt and confusion. They will mistake appearances for genuine truths; they cannot gain clear and true conceptions of the Lord, or of their own natures and relations to Him; and they must make many mistakes concerning what is required of them, and the appropriate means of gaining the largest measures of spiritual life. Such we know has been the result in the first Christian Church. There have been doubts about all the doctrines of the Church. There have been the widest difference of opinion and the gravest doubts about the authority and truthfulness of the directions which teach men how to come into

true relations to the Lord. Some regard them as Divine; others are equally sure that they are merely human, and only the embodiments of the ideas of a narrow and uncultured age. The apparent and the actual are so intimately blended that the mind is confused, and the proper course of action rendered uncertain.

When we add to these conflicting appearances and to this imperfect knowledge the constant tendency of evil to obscure the perceptions of truth and bias the judgment to give a verdict in their favor, we have conditions which render it almost impossible to understand and practice the directions for so disposing and ordering our faculties that we can receive life and spiritual power from the Lord in the highest degree and fullest measure. The history of the world, and the present doubt and darkness and conflict of opinion among those who nominally, or really, accept the Bible as a Divine revelation, is practical and conclusive evidence that it has not hitherto been possible to get from reason, or tradition, or revelation a distinct and rational idea of the Lord's character and relations to men, of man's nature and destiny as a spiritual being, and of the means of attaining it, which is adequate to his wants. The greatest problems of human life to most men are yet an enigma. If there were the same imperfect knowledge, and consequent doubt, uncertainty, and conflict of opinion about any natural end, and the means of attaining it, there would be no hope of success.

What, then, is needed? Evidently, a knowledge of the true meaning of the directions which the Lord has given us for placing ourselves in such relations to Him that He can communicate His life to us, and work in us the purposes of His infinite love and wisdom.

As this connection is to be formed between a spiritual and Divine Being and a human being in the natural world, the directions must have two sides, a spiritual and a natural one, and they must be regarded from both points of view. The ladder of truths which connects man with the Lord is composed of natural, spiritual, and Divine steps, one within another. The mind must not confound them, or stop in the natural. It must ascend by means of it into the spiritual, and from that gain access to the Divine. In this way it rises out of the region of sensuous knowledge, it escapes from the illusion of appearances, and comes into the realm of realities, where all things are seen in their true form and order. From this point of view the directions are plain and easily comprehended.

Practically, this step in spiritual knowledge is of the same kind as that which has been taken by the scientific mind in the knowledge of the material world, and it will give man the same assistance in the attainment of spiritual power and in progress in spiritual life that a true knowledge of the material world has given him in bringing material forces into amicable and useful relations to him. As science has shown him how to put himself into such

relations to the Lord that He can bring His Divine power in natural forms, to work for him and to minister to his comfort and delight in manifold ways, so will a true knowledge of the laws of spiritual life show him how to place himself, as a spiritual being, in such relations to the Lord that the Divine forces of life can act upon him in fulness and regenerating power, creating him anew into His image and likeness, making him His child, the heir of His love and wisdom, and the recipient of His blessedness.

But this knowledge cannot be obtained by reasonings based on the natural forms of spiritual truth. The laws of spiritual life must be seen in their own form and order, and in their relations to the natural plane of existence. But to do this it is necessary that the mind gain a point of view from which both the natural and the spiritual side of truth can be seen at the same time. In his ordinary state, man sees only the natural side. But he is so constituted that his spiritual sight can be opened, as in the case of the prophets, when he can see spiritual objects while his natural sight is closed, or the natural and spiritual are so blended that they cannot be distinguished from one another. In neither case could the distinctions between the spiritual and the natural, and the relations which exist between them, be seen and rationally understood.

To see how spirit acts on matter, how spiritual forces become natural forces and spiritual laws become embodied and revealed in natural laws, and



expressed in human language, it is necessary that both the natural and the spiritual consciousness be awake, so that both sides—the outer and the inner, the natural and the spiritual—can be seen at the same time, and sharply discriminated and accurately compared. In this way alone can the illusions of the senses be dispelled, the obscurities and distortions wrought upon spiritual truth by clothing it in material forms be corrected, and the laws of spiritual life be seen in their true order and normal activities. That such a state is possible, and necessary to another step in spiritual progress, and how the Lord has provided for it, will be the subject to which we must next address ourselves.

## LECTURE VIII.

### HUMAN INSTRUMENTALITY NECESSARY TO THE SECOND COMING.

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me.”—Malachi iii. 1.

EVERY step in human progress has been taken by means of new truth. This is a law of the Divine order organized in man's nature and applicable alike to individuals and to the whole of humanity. Man's existence begins in mere possibilities; but possibilities of such supreme excellence that there are no assignable limits in their development and capacity for knowledge, power, and the attainment of happiness, beyond which they cannot pass. Man's existence begins in the circumference of creation from which he sets out on an endless journey toward the infinite centre, the Lord. Every step of the way is to be taken by the truth. Truth is the way; it forms it for the mind of man, as earth and stones and iron form the way for his feet. Truth gives light on the way. The truths which compose it shine. It is as though every particle of dust in the road, and every stone in the paved street should shine as from an inward light. Truth is the instrument by which the Lord gives us life and power. Truth is the “hem of His garment,” from which

flows forth virtue to all who touch it with living hands. It is as though there were a vital force in the earth and stones, which flowed into the foot at every step, invigorating the whole body with new life. Every new age which humanity passes through on its endless journey is formed by new truths.

But the truths which bridge the gulf and form the way between man and the Lord, do not come immediately and directly from Him; they are always given by human instrumentalities. The child does not gain truth by intuition; it must be taught. When a new age is to be initiated, the Lord always raises up some man who can receive and communicate the truths which create it. The history of human progress in every plane of life supplies us with abundant examples of this Divine method of providing the means for man's spiritual development. Moses was miraculously preserved and educated to lead the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan; to receive from the Lord the commandments and statutes for the civil government, and the institution of the ceremonial worship of the Jews. David was called from keeping sheep to be the keeper of Israel; to lead her armies, to subdue her enemies, and, by singing his own sorrows and conflicts and victories, to sing the songs of every human soul in its conflict with evil, in the shame and sorrow of its defeats and the joy of its victories. Even when the Lord Himself was to come into the world in person, John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way by calling men to repentance; and men were

taken from their employments to be His disciples, that they might become the apostles of His truth, and by committing it to writing, make it the common property of mankind. "John was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" when he was called up into the heavens in the spirit, that he might see "the things which are and the things which shall be hereafter." The whole of revelation contained in the Sacred Scriptures was given by human instrumentality. As this revelation is embodied in human language, the interpretation of its meaning must be given by men also.

If the Spirit of Truth is to come with new power and glory, and guide men into all truth by means of the words which the Lord has spoken unto us by the mouth of His holy prophets, these words must contain all truth; they must have higher meanings than lie upon their surface, and they must be written in a different way from any other book, as we might justly suppose they would be, if the Lord is their author. It is in accordance with all known methods of Divine operation to employ some human agency to do the human side of the work in placing man in such a mental attitude to the Spirit of Truth that he can receive the new light. It cannot break out by an inward force. It must come as the light of science comes from rock and plant, teaching men that it is there, and by placing them in the true position to see it. This can only be done in one of two ways. First, by miraculously

endowing all men with the capacity to discover the truth, each one for himself; or, second, by preparing one mind to receive and communicate the new truth. So far as we have any knowledge of the Divine methods, the latter is the chosen way of infinite wisdom. We have, therefore, rational grounds for the belief that if humanity is to take a new step in spiritual knowledge and life, a human instrument is necessary to do the human side of the work.

This work is a peculiar and difficult one. It cannot be done by means of grammar and lexicon, or any amount of natural knowledge. A clearer exposition of some difficult passages of Scripture is not sufficient. The relation of the letter to the spirit and the law according to which spiritual truth invariably assumes natural forms when it comes down into the natural plane of the creation, must be seen. Both the spiritual and the natural side of truth must be seen at the same time. But this can only be done by one whose spiritual and natural consciousness are both open and active. One of the great difficulties in understanding the Scriptures lies in the fact that we see only one side, and that the side of effects. Language, also, is a very weak and imperfect instrument of communicating the truth, especially when the idea and the expression have only an arbitrary connection. But our Lord said that the words He spoke are spirit and life. They must be the very forms which spiritual forces assume when they come down to the natural plane,

just as the movements of the face and bodily actions are the forms which human thoughts and affections take on when they descend into the body.

We have seen that some human instrument was necessary to teach men the spiritual meaning of natural truth, and that that instrument must be able to see both the natural and spiritual side of the truths of revelation. Swedenborg claims to be that instrument, and to have been in the mental state requisite for doing the work. His statement with regard to the nature of the work, and of his own preparation for it, is so clear that we cannot do better than hear him. He says :

“ That all and every part of the Old Testament, even to the most minute, not excepting the smallest jot and tittle, signify and involve spiritual and celestial things, is a truth to this day deeply hidden from the Christian world ; in consequence of which little attention is paid to it. This truth, however, might appear plainly from this single circumstance, that the Word being of the Lord, and from the Lord, could not possibly be given without containing interiorly such things as relate to heaven, to the church, and to faith. For if this be denied, how can it be called the Word of the Lord, or be said to have any life in it ? For whence is its life but from those things which possess life ? that is, except from hence, that all things in it, both generally and particularly, have relation to the Lord who is the very Life Itself. Wherefore whatsoever does not interiorly regard Him, does not live ; nay, whatso-

ever expression in the Word does not involve Him, or in its measure relate to Him, is not divine.

“For without such a living principle, the Word, as to the letter, is dead. For it is with the Word as it is with a man, who, as all Christians are taught to believe, consists of two parts, an external and an internal. The external man separate from the internal is the body, which, in such a state of separation, is dead; but the internal is that which lives and causes the external to live. The internal man is the soul; and thus the Word as to the letter alone is like a body without a soul.

“It is impossible, whilst the mind abides in the literal sense only, to see that it is full of such spiritual contents.

“That this is really the case, in respect to the Word, it is impossible for any mortal to know, however, except from the Lord. Wherefore, of the Lord’s divine mercy, it has been granted me now for several years to be constantly and uninterruptedly in company with spirits and angels, hearing them converse with each other, and conversing with them. Hence it has been permitted me to hear and see things in another life which are astonishing, and which have never before come to the knowledge of any man, nor entered into his imagination. I have there been instructed concerning different kinds of spirits, and the state of souls after death; concerning hell, or the lamentable state of the unfaithful; concerning heaven, or the most happy state of the faithful, and particularly



concerning the doctrine of faith which is acknowledged throughout all heaven" (A. C., 2, 3, 4, and 5).

Swedenborg reiterates this claim to open and conscious presence in the spiritual world many times during the twenty-seven years of its continuance. In his last work he says, "Since the Lord cannot manifest Himself in Person, and nevertheless has foretold that He will come and found a new church, which is the New Jerusalem, it follows that He will do this by means of a man who can not only receive the doctrines of this church with the understanding, but can also publish them by the press. That the Lord manifested Himself before me, His servant, and sent me to this office, and that He afterward opened the sight of my spirit, and so has intromitted me into the spiritual world, and has granted me to see the heavens and the hells, also to converse with angels and spirits, and this now uninterruptedly for many years, I testify in truth; likewise from the first day of that call I have not received anything which pertains to the doctrines of that church from any angel, but from the Lord alone *while I have read the Word*.

"For the sake of the end that the Lord might be constantly present, He has disclosed to me the spiritual sense of his Word in which Divine truth is in its light, and in this light He is continually present. For His presence in the Word comes only by means of the spiritual sense; through the light of this He passes into the shade in which the sense of the letter is, comparatively as it is with the light

of the sun in the day-time passing through a cloud that is interposed. The sense of the letter of the Word is as a cloud, while the spiritual sense is the glory, and the Lord Himself is the Sun from which the light comes, and so the Lord is the Word" (T. C. R., 779, 780).

Such is Swedenborg's account of his mission, and of the means by which he was prepared and enabled to fulfil it. It is calm, dispassionate, consistent with itself, with the wants of humanity, and perfectly adapted to its accomplishment. It was not a fitful and sudden change. It came on gradually, and continued without intermission for nearly thirty years.

He knew with what incredulity his claims to open spiritual vision would be received, and this is a strong collateral evidence that he was not himself deceived.

"I am well aware," he says, "that many persons will insist that it is impossible for any one to converse with spirits and angels during his life in the body: many, that such intercourse must be mere fancy and illusion; some, that I have invented such relations to gain credence, whilst others will make other objections; for all these, however, I care not, since I have seen, heard, and had sensible experience of what I am about to declare.

"We are created by the Lord so that during our life in the body we may converse with spirits and angels, as, indeed, was the habit of the people of the most ancient times; for being a spirit clothed

with a body, man is one with them. But, because in process of time, mankind so immersed themselves in corporeal and worldly things, caring for almost nothing else, the way to effect this became closed. Nevertheless it is again opened as soon as bodily things are removed, and then man is introduced amongst spirits, and associates with them."

Whether Swedenborg's claims to open and conscious intromission into the spiritual world, and free intercourse with its inhabitants for many years, be true or not, must, ultimately, be decided by other evidence than his own testimony. It must be decided by the necessity for such a service to human progress, by the rationality of the reports he brings to us, and their accord with the well-established general laws of man's nature. His claims must be judged by the Divine and only crucial test, the work itself. This is a test which he and those who accept the doctrines taught by him earnestly invite. Let us see distinctly what those claims are.

He claims to have been admitted openly and consciously into the spiritual world, and to have associated freely and widely with its inhabitants of all classes for many years. He was not in a state of trance. His natural and spiritual faculties were awake at the same time, so that he could see both the natural and the spiritual at the same time, and could accurately distinguish between them. He did not confound the natural with the spiritual, or the spiritual with the natural, and mistake one for the other. He saw them side by side; he could

compare one with the other; he could discriminate their differences, and see how they were related.

By these means he claims to have disclosed to men the grand truth of the substantial existence of the spiritual world, as distinct from the material world as the human spirit is from the material body, and bearing about the same relations to it that the spirit bears to the body. He declares that it is a *world* in the true meaning of the word, and possesses all the forms, features, and qualities essential to a world. It is objective to the inhabitants; they dwell in it as we dwell in the material world, they have their homes in it, and find the most ample means of happiness in its wide and lovely realm. The inhabitants are spiritual, but truly human beings, in the human form, having all the organs and senses of human beings. Their spiritual bodies are related and exquisitely adjusted to the substances and forces, the attractions and influences of the spiritual earth, as our material bodies are adapted to a material earth. The inhabitants of that world see by means of spiritual light, they breathe a spiritual atmosphere, and speak and hear by means of it. The innumerable company of human beings who have been born upon the earth, and have passed away from it, are living there now, retaining their consciousness, and preserving their identity, and have lost nothing of their form or faculties, or of the qualities of human beings. The essential difference between the spiritual and the material worlds, and the inhabitants who dwell in them, consists

in the supreme excellence of spiritual substances, which can take on more various and lovely forms: and, in the case of human beings, can be moulded into organs capable of more exquisite sensations.

He has, also, described the manner in which the inhabitants of the spiritual world are organized into societies according to their characters, their modes of life, their dwellings, the scenery which surrounds them, the ample means of happiness which the good possess, and the torments which afflict the wicked. His account of what he saw and heard in a state of clear spiritual wakefulness, is so minute and graphic, and consistent with itself, and with all the known laws of man's spiritual nature and wants, that, supposing it to be true, we get a distinct and satisfactory idea of the spiritual world as a real and substantial world; and of life in it, as individual, conscious, and supplied with all the means for the unlimited development of every spiritual faculty, and the attainment of ever-increasing happiness. Personality becomes more distinct, the senses more acute, the outward world more substantial and rich in beautiful forms, social life more harmonious and lovely, and everything without and within more nicely adjusted to supply every spiritual want and to minister to every heavenly desire. Hope becomes fruition, and the purest ideals, and the loftiest aspirations are realized.

If Swedenborg's account of the spiritual world was given in a state of ecstasy, or if it was a theory of his own, unsupported by any substantial evidence

independent of him, it might be classed with the multitude of fancies and speculations and guesses which have appeared in every age of the Church, though more rational, consistent, and every way worthy of the Lord, and in accordance with man's nature than any of them. But he sets out with certain well-established laws and principles of universal application to which he constantly adheres, and to the judgment of which he brings every statement he makes, even the most trivial, concerning the spiritual world. He commits himself to the custody of these immutable laws and asks that his disclosures be received, not on his personal testimony, but on the testimony of universal principles. He takes ground against himself, as it were, "I know," he says, "that these things are incredible; but they are, nevertheless, true." Their incredibility, however, does not consist in the fact that they are contrary to the laws of the Divine order, or impossible in the nature of things, but in this, that they are above the conceptions of human ignorance, and surpass the limits of the natural senses.

By his intromission into the spiritual world, Swedenborg gained the true point of view to see the relation between the natural and the spiritual worlds, between natural and spiritual truth, and how they act and react the one upon the other. He saw the spiritual side of natural truth. He was raised above appearances; saw spiritual principles in their true forms and order, and, in this way, while he was able to guard against the illusions of

appearances, he could, at the same time, understand them. In this intellectual position he could be instructed concerning the manner in which the Word was written. He found that it was written according to the law of relation between spiritual and natural things. He learned that material objects and natural actions and events were the effects of spiritual causes, and, therefore, that they were the natural exponents of spiritual laws and forces; or, in other words, of spiritual and Divine truths. In this way he claims to have gained a scientific law of exegesis, of universal application in the interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures; a law which inheres in the nature and relations of spirit and matter. This method of interpreting the Scriptures does not consist in *spiritualizing* the natural meaning, as that is commonly understood, or in putting fanciful meanings into the words of the Lord, but in following the guidance of a law, which actually exists, to its necessary results. There is no more fancy in this mode of interpretation than there is in the meaning of the figures in a mathematical calculation. If, for example, water is the natural exponent of one degree of spiritual truth, it must be so taken wherever it is mentioned in the Word, and in whatever form and relations it occurs. The fixed, unalterable meaning is truth, the meaning being modified according to the subjects connected, with it, the modification itself, however, following an immutable law. And so with regard to every other natural object and action and person men-



tioned in the Word. The wildest scenes of prophetic vision, and the most explicit statement of natural acts, are subject to this law, and by its application even numbers and dry genealogies yield the most precious practical truths. The letter becomes transfigured and shines like the sun. The glory of the Lord illuminates it, and the power of the Divine truth penetrates and is transmitted by it.

By means of this higher and specific knowledge of the Word, we get all the means necessary or useful in coming into such relation to the Divine forces that they can operate upon us in the most direct and helpful manner. We gain a true knowledge of the Lord. The Lord reveals Himself to us in His Word, spiritually understood, in His true form and character. He not only reveals the fact of His existence, but He reveals His form and character and purposes and relations to us, and the means He employs to carry His purposes of love and wisdom into effect. And He does this with such accuracy and precision, that He comes distinctly before us in His Divine and glorious personalty. All obscurities are removed, all conflicting views concerning His attributes and personalty, which originated in the letter, are reconciled. He reveals Himself as one Being, one Person, in one glorious human form, as the distinct and central object of thought and affection. "We have one Lord and His name one."

With equal clearness and precision and distinctness we find our own spiritual natures revealed to

us. We find not only that we have spirits, but that we are spirits. We not only get satisfactory knowledge of the fact, but also about the form and substance and organization of our spiritual natures. Spirit becomes something more than a name, or a force. It is substance, it is form, it is the man himself. The relative position and estimate of the body and soul are reversed. The spirit gives form to the body. The material body is the accident, the evanescent, the unreal. The spirit is the constant, the substantial. The spiritual world is the real world. We are citizens of that world; are formed to dwell in it, and to find in it our eternal home.

We not only learn that we are spiritual beings, and that a spiritual being is something more than a name, but we see in the clear light of spiritual truth the forms, degrees, and relations of our spiritual faculties to one another, and the proper order and essential means for their development. We learn that the laws of spiritual life are not empirical or arbitrarily imposed us; we see that they grow out of us, or rather, that they are organized in us, as the laws which control the growth of a plant are organized in its structure; or as the laws of physical life and growth are organized in the material body. We all know that the body was not made and then put under the dominion of arbitrary laws. It is its own law. So the spirit is the embodiment of all the laws which determine its relations to other beings and things, and which regulate all its activities and prescribe its means of

growth. In a word, it is discovered that the Sacred Scriptures, when seen in spiritual light, are a statement, in natural language and symbolic forms, of the laws and principles of the Divine nature, and of man's nature. The Lord is the Word, because the Bible is the transcript and expression of principles which exist in Him in their infinite fulness and perfection. He is the truth; revelation is the expression of the truth which exists in Him. It is the presentation of it in forms adapted to human use and transmission. As man was made in the likeness and image of God, by which we are to understand that the laws of the Divine nature were finited in him, the Scriptures are a statement of the laws of life embodied in him. They are a spiritual physiology. They were given for the same relative purpose that a book on physiology is written and put into the hands of a medical student; and that is, for the purpose of acquainting man with the principles of his spiritual nature, the laws which are enacted in its structure, which regulate its activities, point out its relations to the sources of power and life, and reveal the means for its development, and the attainment of its ends.

Now, it is admitted by all that this Book, which Christians regard as the Word of the Lord, contains many things difficult to be understood, many things which have only a remote and inferential relation to men in the present time, some things which seem to be contradictory, some which cannot be literally true. Divine truths are presented in such a form

that good men have come to directly opposite conclusions concerning their meaning on all the fundamental principles of the Lord's nature, of man's nature, and of their relation to one another. There are many and painful doubts about their meaning. Men walk in the dark. The highest Christian attainment consists in walking by faith, and an implicit trust in the Divine goodness. By the common methods of interpretation, the Spirit of Truth has not yet gained such access to the minds of even the best of men that He can lead them into all truth. And by the ordinary methods of interpretation there are no rational grounds for the hope of any improvement in this respect.

Swedenborg claims to have rendered to men precisely the service which they need in overcoming the obstacles to a true understanding of the Word. He claims to have given the law according to which it was written, and the key to its Divine and spiritual meaning. Whether his claims are true or not can only be determined for each individual by a personal examination of his methods and their results. But no rational mind can deny that this is precisely what we want to meet the growing scepticism of the age, and to put man into such relations to the source of power and life that he can receive them in full measure and effective form.

Man has lost his spiritual life by departing from the only conditions on which he could receive it. He can regain it only by coming into those conditions. He must put himself into such relations to

the source of life that its Divine forces can act upon him. The means of doing this, and the way of doing it, are revealed in the Word. The Word was given for that purpose. But such were human conditions, and the relations between the Lord and man, that these directions could only be given in precepts, formal commandments, and natural symbols. The laws and qualities of spirit and matter are so different in nature, that spiritual truths cannot be presented in their naked and own proper forms in natural language. They can only be expressed in correspondential images; and these images are not the truths themselves, but the garments in which they appear when they come down into the natural plane of creation. The natural garments are often very unlike the truth itself; and men in low natural conditions are liable to mistake the appearance for the truth itself. In this way they are misled; they come to false conclusions, they wander so far from the paths of the Divine order that the Lord cannot reveal Himself to them, and work with efficiency and success for their spiritual good. What, then, does man need? Evidently, some one to show him the difference between the apparent and the genuine truth.

Swedenborg claims to have done this. Those who have carefully examined his claims, and tested them by the results of his work, believe them to be well founded. He has disclosed to men the genuine meaning of the Word, and by so doing he has shown us how we can put ourselves into such

relations to the Lord that His Divine forces can act upon us in the most direct and efficient manner. He has done for man, spiritually, what all the discoverers in natural science have done for him as a material being. They have discovered natural forces, and shown how we can so adjust ourselves to them that they can come to us and work for us in manifold ways. Swedenborg was raised up and brought into such a state that he could be admitted consciously into the spiritual world, and see the true relations between spirit and matter, and by these means disclose to man the genuine meaning of the Word, and show him how to find in its sacred pages the laws of his spiritual being, and the specific directions for adjusting himself with absolute precision to the nature, form, order, and flow of the Divine forces from which he receives all his power to love, think, act, and even to exist.

When man assumes this attitude to the Lord, and places himself in the current of the Divine forces, the Lord can come to him in power and glory. The way is open; there are no obstructions. Man is in the river of life; its currents flow through him, cleansing him from the defilements of sin, vivifying and making fruitful every faculty into which they come. The Spirit of Truth, which is a river of light, and flows into his understanding, can bring all things to man's remembrance which the Lord has spoken in His Word. It can show him in all the prophets things concerning Himself, and according to the degree of his reception, He

can lead him into all truth. He can come to man and dwell with him, and conjoin him to Himself; give him the living rest of feeling, thinking, acting in accord with the harmonies of the Divine order, and the profound peace of reposing in the heart of the Divine love.

This clear knowledge of the Lord, whom to know aright is life everlasting, and this accurate adjustment of the human organism to the nature and order of the Divine forces of love and truth, is all that is necessary to the fulfilment of every sign and promised effect of His Second Coming, and to the accomplishment of His clearly expressed purpose of establishing His kingdom among men, and so flooding their minds with the light of His truth, and so filling their hearts with the life of His love, that "His will will be done on earth as it is in heaven."



## LECTURE IX.

### THE SPIRITUAL WORLD: MAN'S FINAL HOME; THE THEATRE OF THE JUDGMENT.

“In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, ye may be also.”—John xiv. 2, 3.

BEFORE proceeding to discuss the questions of the Resurrection, the Judgment, and other stupendous effects of the Second Coming, it is necessary to a rational knowledge of their cause and nature to get a distinct and true idea of the spiritual world. All the doctrines and theories of the Consummated Age concerning these events have been obscure, conflicting, and unsatisfactory for the lack of this knowledge. They have been regarded wholly from the side of appearances, and the most potent causes of these grand events have been entirely ignored. Under such circumstances it would be impossible to come to just and rational conclusions. Half truths, and especially the half which consists of appearances, are always misleading. It is impossible to understand any question which involves the action of spiritual and natural forces without some knowledge of both. The same conditions are necessary that are requisite in understanding spiritual truths

expressed in natural language, both sides must be seen and accurately discriminated.

The spiritual world must be the theatre of causes. The Lord came from it when He made His first Advent, and He returned to it. The inevitable questions which spring to the lips are, "Whither goest Thou?" He declares that He is going to prepare a place for us in the Father's house, and that He will come again and receive us unto Himself. Where is the Father's House? What is the nature of the world in which the Lord dwells? These are questions which must be answered before we can get any true knowledge of the way to our final home, and what it will be when we find it.

The innumerable company of human beings who have been born upon the earth and have passed away from it, have, as most Christians believe, entered into it. That must, therefore, be the most populous world. Our fathers and mothers, and friends, and the multitude of whom we know something from history, are there. Where are they? what are they doing? what are the conditions of their life? what are their relations to us? These are questions which have been asked, and which are now asked with more emphasis than ever. They are questions which every one who has any spiritual life must ask, and they are questions to which no consistent and rational answer was given by the first Christian Age. The apostles did not give it, the fathers did not give it, and the wisest men who now teach the doctrines of the Consummated Age, do not,

and acknowledge that they cannot, give it. Such is the nature of the human mind that it can only be given by one who has been consciously admitted into the spiritual world, and knew that he was in it, and could discriminate between it and this. Swedenborg is perfectly logical in claiming to have *seen* and *heard*, not in a state of vision or trance, while his natural senses were closed, but while they were open, what he has said about the spiritual world. He claims to have been consciously in both worlds at the same time; to have been in the spirit and in the body. If this were so, there could be no illusion. He could see the spiritual and the material at the same time, and from this point of view he could discern their differences and their relations. Whether his claims be true or not, as I have said before, must be determined by the rationality of his disclosures, and their consistency with revealed truth, and the wants of man. One thing is certain, in gaining his knowledge of the spiritual world he never violates a law of the human mind, or asks for conditions which were not essential to the work he claims to have performed.

The disclosures which Swedenborg has made concerning the spiritual world, its relations to this world, and the conditions of human life there, are not only consistent with themselves and with Revelation, but they throw a flood of light upon the Scriptures, and fully meet one of the deepest wants of men. They are essential to any further progress in the knowledge of our eternal home. A more

particular examination of the subject will show the great need of such knowledge, how fully Swedenborg has supplied it, and its important bearings upon the Second Coming of the Lord.

The belief in a life after the death of the body has prevailed in all ages and in all conditions of men. The most ignorant as well as the most enlightened look forward to an existence beyond the grave either with hope or fear. The ideas which have prevailed concerning the forms which men assume when they have cast aside the material body, their occupations and relations to each other, and the sources of their joys and sorrows, vary according to the culture of the people, from the wildest and most fantastic of the savage nations, to the clearest conceptions formed by true knowledge.

In the Consummated Age the ideas which have prevailed about the spiritual world, and the conditions of human life in it, have been vague, conflicting, and unsatisfactory. It was a great step from the unbelief engendered by the sensuous nature of the Jewish mind, to the acceptance of the fact that the spirit has an existence distinct from the body, and lives in a spiritual world; but the men of that age have never passed much beyond the acknowledgment of the fact. There have been many theories and speculations about the origin, nature, and employments of the angels, the happiness of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked; but little more is regarded as estab-

lished than the general conclusion that the good are happy and the wicked are miserable. So vague, undefined, and barren of detail have been the notions of Christians; so little have they learned from the Word in which it is claimed that "life and immortality are brought to light," that the general conclusion of the Christian world is, that the Lord did not intend that man should have any definite knowledge of the life after death, and that it is even wrong to seek for it. It is the general opinion that nothing certain can be known concerning it, and that we must wait until we pass through the gates of death before we can obtain any certain knowledge of the hereafter.

The ideas about the nature of spirit have greatly tended to produce this inconclusive result. According to the common idea, spirit is destitute of substance and form. It is a force, or a vital principle; a substanceless shadow of the real nature of which nothing can be predicated but existence. It cannot, therefore, be an object of distinct and related thought. It is impossible to conceive that it sustains relations and has modes of action. This conception of spirit puts it beyond the reach of definition and knowledge, and when carried to its logical conclusions, beyond existence, even. That which has no substance and form can have no existence, for existence, in its very nature, is some being or thing which stands forth in substantial form distinct from any other being or thing.

The doctrines of the New Age, as stated in the writings of Swedenborg, present the subject in a totally different manner. They set out from what must be regarded as an axiom, that the Lord, who is the Creator, the cause of all causes, must be the most real and substantial being in the universe, and that substantiality and form and motion, and nice distinction of quality and relation, must increase in excellence as they approach the cause of all causes and effects, the Former of all forms, the substance of all substances. It is a logical conclusion from these premises that the spiritual world must be a more distinct and substantial world than the material, and more complete and varied in the forms which compose it. Its substances must be of a purer nature; they must be capable of assuming a greater variety of more beautiful forms; its forces must be more powerful, and act with more precision than material forces. Forms organized of those substances must be more beautiful, and capable of receiving a higher degree of the Divine life which lives in and moves the whole universe to action. All the conditions of life in that world must possess an excellence corresponding to the substances which are the recipients of life, and which condition it. These are logical conclusions from premises which all Christians admit.

In accordance with these principles, the doctrines of the New Age teach that there is a spiritual world entirely distinct from and above the material world, as man's spirit is distinct from and above the body.

By *above* I do not mean *over* it in space, but superior to it in all the qualities of a world.

There are many evidences of the existence of a spiritual world, or, more properly, of a spiritual universe,—for it includes suns, and systems of suns, as well as earths,—which the limits of these lectures will not allow me to notice. It is sufficient for my present purpose to gain some logical ground to stand upon to show that the very nature of the Lord, and the existence of a material world, demand a spiritual world. Having, therefore, gained a place to stand in a spiritual world, let us consider what kind of world it is.

1. First, it is a world or universe in the true and fullest sense of the meaning of the word “world.” “In external appearance it is altogether like the material world; land, mountains, hills, valleys, plains, fields, lakes, rivers, and springs, and so all things belonging to the mineral kingdom, appear there as in the natural world. In like manner paradises, gardens, groves, forests, containing trees and shrubs of every kind, with their fruits and seed, plants, flowers, grasses, and, in a word, all things which belong to the vegetable kingdom. Animals appear there also, and birds and fishes of every kind, and, therefore, everything that belongs to the animal kingdom. The spiritual universe is precisely similar in general form to the material universe. There are sun, moon, and stars, clouds and atmospheres of various kinds as there are in this world. The inhabitants of the



spiritual world breathe a spiritual atmosphere, and see by means of a spiritual ether, as we do by means of material ether. In respect to form, the relations of one object to another, and to the general appearance of all things, is so similar to this world that those who pass into it do not know, at first, from the difference of their surroundings, that they have passed from one world into another."

This, I know, is entirely contrary to common opinion. One of the first objections to this doctrine of the spiritual world is, that it is nothing more than materialism. Men come to this conclusion from their erroneous ideas of the essential qualities of spirit, and of the difference between matter and spirit. People suppose they gain a true idea of spirit by denying to it all the properties of matter, even those of substance and form. But instead of gaining an idea of spirit by this method, they lose all idea of everything. There cannot be a substance without a form; and substance and form are essential to existence. It is impossible for the mind to conceive of any being or thing without a form. To say that there is a spiritual world, and to deny to it all the forms and objects which constitute a world, is to say and to unsay at the same time. To conceive of happiness without any organized forms, modes of action, or definite relations to other forms, is to attempt to conceive of the inconceivable, and to suppose that there can be effects without any cause. This is as absurd as it would be to imagine that we could have the pleasures of taste without any organs

of taste, or any substances to act upon them; or that we could enjoy the pleasures of sight without eyes, or light. In a word, the prevalent notions concerning the spirit and the spiritual world take away all the known conditions of happiness or misery, and then imagine man to be supremely blessed, or to suffer unutterable torments.

To render the confusion and absurdity still worse, that is practically accepted which is denied in doctrine. Hell has been pictured in a most terrible realism. It has been set forth as a lake of material fire, on whose scorching billows the wicked spirits are tossed and tormented, but never consumed. While, on the other hand, the righteous find their happiness in surrounding the throne of God and glorifying Him in everlasting song. But how could substanceless and formless essences, if such a thing were possible, surround a formless throne and praise an infinite and formless spirit? What kind of songs could a formless spirit sing? The nature of the human mind compels men to give form and modes of action and relations to spiritual beings, while the common doctrine denies that they have or can have any. In this way the mind is brought into a state of conflict and doubt, and the result is a formal assent and a practical disbelief in the real existence of a spiritual world. The doctrines of the New Age, on the contrary, are, to say the least, logical and true to themselves, and demand nothing contradictory or contrary to the nature of things.

2. Again: The doctrine that the spiritual world in general appearances is like the material world, or, to put it more correctly, that this world is like the spiritual world, accords with all the laws of the creation, so far as we have any knowledge of them.

The spiritual world being nearer the Lord, the first cause is pre-eminently the world of causes in its relations to the material world. All material forms are cast into the mould of spiritual forms. Let us think of this matter a moment. There is no power in the ground, in a ploughed field, to form itself into the beautiful organizations of grass, wheat, and corn. There is no power in the dead mould, in water or gas, light or heat, to select from their gross elements the fine substances which enter into the composition of the plant and weave them into the delicate web of the rose and lily, and to create the various fruits which support animal life. Whence comes this wonderful power which creates the animal and vegetable kingdoms out of the dust of the ground? We say that spiritual forces are everywhere present in the material world, as man's spirit is everywhere present in the world of his body, working these miracles of beauty and use. We say that spiritual forms are creating material forms in their own likeness, weaving garments out of the purer substances of nature with which they clothe themselves. The heat and light of the sun are only the fires in which material substances are brought into such a state that the finer spiritual forces can use them, as man melts

the metals in a furnace that they may run into his moulds and assume the form of his ideas. We have examples of this law of creation in ourselves, and in every organized form. There is no power in the food we eat to organize itself into the organs which compose the human form. In what loom and by whose skilful fingers, and according to what pattern, are they woven? The spirit weaves them into its own image. The body is in the human form because the spirit which creates it is. Man performs all his works in shaping material substances to his will according to this law and in this order. He does everything spiritually before he does it naturally. The model according to which every man works is spiritual. The artist paints his picture in his mind before he paints it on canvas. The mechanic makes his garment, constructs his engine, builds his house mentally before he does it materially. This is a universal law of human action. The domestic cannot sweep a room, the carpenter cannot drive a nail,—no one can take a step, or lift a finger, until it is done spiritually.

In affirming, therefore, that the material world is created from the spiritual world and cast into the mould of its forms, Swedenborg only states a universal law of creation, a Divine method, from which, so far as we have any knowledge, the Lord never departs. We have reasons founded in the nature of things, and in all the methods of the Divine order, therefore, for the belief that the spiritual world is a substantial world, and full of all the objects

which constitute a world. The objects in its three kingdoms are similar to those in the three kingdoms of this world, because all material forms are made after spiritual models.

3. There is another rational ground for this doctrine worthy of our consideration. So far as we know excellence of state and condition increases with the increase of the number, variety, and perfection of the forms which compose it. For example: the power of this world to minister to human happiness, depends upon the variety and excellence of the objects which compose and adorn it. This is clearly seen by the difference between a desert of sand and a luxuriant and highly-cultivated field; or in the still stronger contrast between the ocean and the land. A new plant adds to the beauty of a garden. Mountains and hills and valleys, rocks and trees, lakes and streams, make up the beauty of a landscape. In animal life, perfection and the power of enjoyment increase with the variety and perfection of the organs. Think of the capacity of an oyster or jelly-fish for happiness compared with a finely-organized human being! The supreme glory and superiority of man to gain happiness from innumerable things consists in the variety and perfection of his organism. A man who has no eyes is shut out from a whole world of instrumentalities for happiness. Destroy his hearing and he is shut out from another world. Imagine a human being without any senses, and he would have no more capacity for enjoyment than a stone.

The theories and dogmas which generally prevail concerning the spirit, and the spiritual world, lead to vagueness and unsubstantiality. They make the spirit a simple force or a shadow; they vacate the spiritual world of all substances and distinct forms, and consequently they make it a barren world. They take away from it all, or nearly all, known means of happiness. Suppose it does not possess any of the forms which constitute this world. Suppose it has no mountains, hills, valleys, no earth, no water, no atmosphere, no sun or stars. Would it be a beautiful home to dwell in forever? No; it is a void compared with which Sahara would be a paradise. All the conditions of happiness, so far as we have any knowledge of them, are taken away.

It is also directly contrary to all the Lord's methods of accomplishing His purposes of good to man, so far as we know anything about them. So far as we know, the Lord creates a form to be the recipient of His life, and the more varied and complex and excellent the form, the more varied and greater man's capacity for happiness. The more excellent the organism, the more varied and excellent the forms in which the Lord can come to man and bless him.

We do not see how men can come to any other conclusion than that the spiritual world in which man is to live forever, must possess all the elements and means of happiness in much greater abundance and excellence than this world, where he remains but a moment compared with his whole existence.

Accordingly, the doctrines of the New Age declare that, while the spiritual world in its general features resembles this, it immeasurably surpasses it in the number, variety, beauty, grandeur, and excellence of the forms which compose it. Reasoning from the law of analogy and nature of things, let us notice some of the conclusions to which we are logically lead.

As the spiritual world is composed of substances distinctly higher in degree and correspondingly pure and more mobile and sensitive to the inflowing Divine and creative forces, the resulting effects would necessarily possess a superior excellence. A greater number and variety of forms in the three spiritual kingdoms could be created. We know that what the Lord can create out of any given piece of ground depends upon the elements contained in it. Wheat will not grow in a soil which does not contain the elements which enter into it. The richer the soil in organic elements the greater, other things being equal, the products which can be created out of it. Suppose them to be indefinitely increased in excellence and variety, and to come more fully under the power of creative forces, and we must logically conclude that there would be a corresponding increase in the variety and excellence of the objects which would result from such conditions. We infer, therefore, that what we call the objects of nature here, but which are the objects of spirit there, must far surpass those in this world. There must be precious stones which exceed in



brilliancy the diamond, the ruby, and emerald, as much as they exceed coarse pebbles of granite and sandstone. There must be flowers shining with an inward light, glowing with the most lovely colors, moulded into the most elegant forms, and sending forth the most exquisite fragrance. There must be many varieties which could not be formed out of gross material elements. So we might go on and show that every kingdom in the spiritual world must possess objects which correspond in number and excellence to the nature of that world.

It may be said that we do not know anything about it. I believe we do. But that is not the question we are now considering. The question is, to what conclusions are we logically, and I may say, inevitably led by our premises. If it is said there is nothing objective to the beings who dwell in the spiritual world, then I can come to no other conclusion than that it is a world only in name. If it is said that the objects are not as numerous and in as great variety, then I cannot stop short of the conclusion that it is not so well adapted to human happiness as this world. Every step in the direction of depriving it of form and substance degrades it. But to proceed with our argument. If spiritual substance possesses more excellent qualities than matter; if it is purer and yields more readily to the creative forces which flow into it, the forms which are created by them must be more nicely and exquisitely finished; their lines must be finer and more beautiful, and every spiritual object must be

more sharply discriminated from every other. As we go towards excellence we come into the region of individuality, of nice distinctions. The spiritual world, therefore, instead of being vague, shadowy, spectral, undefined, and empty, must be the realm of distinctness. Every object must appear more clear to every sense; it must be easier to distinguish one plant or animal from another than it is in this world.

There are two other causes which would necessitate this distinctness of form. The human senses would necessarily be much more delicate and acute. The power of perceiving the forms of objects and of learning their qualities from our sensations, is wholly spiritual even in this world. The spiritual senses are clothed with a garment of material flesh, to enable them to come in contact with coarse and hard material forms. How fine and delicate they must be, therefore, when divested of this covering! The difference must be greater than that which exists between a gloved and ungloved hand.

The second cause of increased distinctness of every object in the spiritual world is increase of light. A spiritual sun must have a corresponding excellence and power to a spiritual earth. The light, therefore, must be of intense brightness, and every object must shine in it so clearly that, compared with it, the objects in this world would be in obscurity in the brightest day. What pure and clear and lovely colors must clothe and adorn the various heavenly forms! How every gem must

sparkle and glow in that heavenly light! Imagine a diamond as much purer in substance than a material diamond, as that is purer than a pebble of granite, radiating a light compared with which the brightest splendors of the sun of this world is but a shadow, and then suppose the sense of sight to have a corresponding increase in acuteness, delicacy, and power, and you can logically conclude that the reality must far surpass our conception.

This law of increase in perfection in form, action, and quality would necessarily apply to the sense of hearing. The spiritual ear would be more nicely and delicately attuned to heavenly concords. How soft and sweet and grand would be the harmonies—the unwritten music—that would rise and fall and swell upon the ear! Every spiritual object would be capable of finer vibrations, of sending forth a fuller and sweeter tone. Every condition of the outward world, as an instrument, and of the inward world of man's nature for the enjoyment of it, would be greatly increased in every quality of excellence.

Would not these be better and more rational conditions of happiness, more in accordance with man's nature, and all known laws and methods of Divine operation, than an empty universe in which formless and substanceless essences flitted about, as mere phantoms in a phantom world?

There is another law of the Divine order which we see in mere outline but in many beautiful forms in this world, which must exist in perfection in the

spiritual world, and that is the adaptation, the nice fitting of the outward world to the inhabitants. We see this principle of adaptation in its most general form in the three kingdoms of nature. The fish is perfectly adapted to the water in every part of its structure. The bird, in the same manner, is formed for the air, and the air for the bird. The earth is variously and specifically adapted to the animal. The air is made for the lungs, and the lungs for the air. The eye contains in its little orb all the qualities and motions of the ether. The power which draws men and animals to the earth, and the animal strength to resist it, is perfectly adjusted. If the attraction was much stronger, locomotion would be impossible. If it was much weaker, bodies would be thrown from the earth. Heat and cold are adjusted with the nicest precision to the organization of plants and animals. A diminution would destroy all animal life. The forms and influences of the outward world are in general wonderfully adapted to the tastes and wants of the natural mind.

But still no outward conditions fully satisfy man's tastes and desires, or even his physical condition. The heat is often too great or too feeble. It is too dry or too wet. How much physical suffering is caused by exposure to changes of climate, exposure to extremes of temperature, from barren, uncongenial, and repulsive external conditions! Man wages a perpetual warfare with nature to protect himself from her severities, to secure a comfortable support,

and a pleasant habitation. How much delight we derive from pleasant weather! A fresh, balmy, and pure atmosphere is a constant blessing. Men spend immense fortunes and the labor of years to secure a pleasant home with beautiful surroundings. The great part of human labor is employed in gaining sustenance, providing clothing and habitation, overcoming the obstructions of time and space, and in bringing the outward world into harmony with our tastes and desires.

There will be no such difficulties and causes of suffering in the spiritual world. Spiritual substances yield to spiritual forces as material substances yield to material forces. They readily take on the forms of the thought, and the qualities of the desires of the inhabitants, to the fullest extent and in the most minute particulars. The outward world corresponds to the inward world of thought and affection. These two worlds are perfectly adapted to one another. There is no lack and no superfluity. Man finds everything congenial to him, and fully adequate to all his mental and spiritual wants. He fully attains what he is constantly striving for in this life. He finds all things in harmony with himself.

This arises from the fact that the outward world can be created from the inward world. Spiritual substances take on the forms of the thoughts spontaneously, without any effort of the hand to cut and mould them to the ideal. Man's spiritual nature possesses a spiritual force which takes hold of spirit-

ual substances and moulds them into the forms of his ideas, as attraction takes hold of water and moulds it into drops. Every one creates his own world. The garments he wears will correspond to his thought. They will be his own thoughts in substance, in texture, in color, in fashion, just as our dress would be here if we had unlimited power in the selection of materials, and were compelled to choose the fashion of it for ourselves. This law is not a peculiar one. It is seen everywhere in the material world. As there is something in the nature of a seed which necessitates the form and color of the leaves and blossoms of the plant; as there is something in the nature of every bird and animal which determines the kind, quality, and color of its clothing, whether it shall be scale, or feather, or hair, or fur; whether it shall be red or white, or black or variegated, so there is something in man's nature which will become his clothing in the spiritual world, where all artificial and merely mechanical laws are abolished, and man comes into harmony with all things.

According to this law his house will be the form of his thought. It will be his ideal of a dwelling, in situation, in size, in arrangement, in architecture, in ornament, in material, in every particular. It will fit his tastes, and be adequate to his desires, in every respect. The landscape around him will answer to the ideal within him in the same manner. Thus we shall all gain, in the spiritual world, what we are all striving for here, fitness, adaptation to our

tastes, perfect equilibrium between the world without and the world within. Our character will create our circumstances. A barren nature will make every thing barren around it. If the soil is sterile within, it will be sterile without. If the nature is low and lustful, it will create the stagnant marsh, crawling vipers, and stinging insects. If it is fierce and cruel and treacherous, we shall find ourselves in the midst of plants and animals which are the embodied forms of our own life. If our natures are rich with heavenly principles, the objective world will form itself into images of corresponding excellence. It will give beauty to our garments, elegance and taste to our dwelling. It will stretch around us in lovely landscapes, and fill them with animal and vegetable forms which are the exponents of our thoughts,—which are our thoughts in organic and living forms, as the pictures on the artist's canvas are the forms of his thoughts. The birds will sing our affections, the flowers will blossom with the beauty of our souls, and every object will be a mirror in which we can see ourselves.

“It is the soul's prerogative, its fate,  
To shape the outward to its own estate.  
If right itself, then all around is well.  
If wrong, it makes of all without a hell.  
So multiplies the soul its joy or pain,  
Gives out itself, itself takes back again.  
Transformed by thee, the world hath but one face.  
Look there my soul and thine own features trace.  
And all through time and down eternity,  
Where'er thou goest, that face of thine shall look on thee.”



Such, in brief outline, is the world in which the Lord prepares a place for every human being. We are citizens of that world, and in it we are to find our eternal home. All who have passed away from the earth have been gathered there, and all who will be born in the coming ages, will be raised up into it when they cast off the material body. The spiritual world, therefore, must be the theatre of the final Judgment, and of those stupendous changes which are described in the Word, in connection with the Second Coming.

We have now learned that there is a substantial spiritual world, in which all human beings who have begun their existence on the earth, and have passed into it through the gates of death, are now living. We have found where the Judgment is held, and have learned something of the nature of the world in which it is held. We have, therefore, gained the true point of view to understand why the Coming of the Son of Man in the power and glory of spiritual truth should effect a resurrection and a Judgment; what heavens and earth fled away at His coming, and what new heavens and what new earth were created by His presence, and these will be the subjects for our consideration in the discourses which are to follow.

## LECTURE X.

### THE RESURRECTION OF MAN.

“Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believeth thou this?”—John xi. 23-26.

DEATH and resurrection have two meanings which are quite distinct from each other. When death is spoken of in relation to the material body, it means its dissolution and return to the elements which composed it. When it refers to the soul, it means the perversion of all man's spiritual faculties, by which he becomes the embodiment of error and sin. It is called the “second death,” and is the condition of all who have not been born from above, and made alive by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. Resurrection is also of two kinds,—the resurrection of man from his material body, and the resurrection of the soul from spiritual death, which is also called the “first resurrection,” because it is first in time, but more especially because it is first in importance. All men will be raised up from the material body, but only those who become regenerate will be the subjects of the first resurrection. In the present lecture I propose

to speak only of the resurrection of man from his material body.

The spiritual world, as we saw in the last lecture, is a substantial world in the generally accepted meaning of the word, and is to be man's eternal home. He must, therefore, pass into it. This transition has two aspects and two names, according to the point of view from which it is regarded. When viewed from this world, it is called death; when from the spiritual world, it is called resurrection. If we identify man with his material body, it is death; if with his soul, it is resurrection. Death and resurrection are two sides of the same event.

The subject, as will be readily seen, has a most important bearing upon the Second Coming. If the Judgment is to take place in the spiritual world, those upon whom it is to be executed must be in that world. It is also intimately related to the increased effect of the Divine power upon men, and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth which is to follow and to be effected by the Second Coming. It is one link in the chain of causes and effects by which the Lord will work out His purposes of good to men. It is essential to our reasoning and to our conclusions, therefore, that it should be established by the testimony of the Lord in His Word, and in His works, and by the clearest rational considerations.

I am to speak of the resurrection of man. As we identify man sometimes with his material body and sometimes with his soul, it is essential to a clear

understanding of the subject that we get the question distinctly before us. By man I mean the spiritual part of our nature. The spirit is the subject and theatre of all the distinctly human qualities and activities. I mean, also, a human being in the human form, possessing all the faculties which distinguish him from all other created beings or things, and possessing a consciousness of his individuality. I do not mean a vital force, or a formless essence. They do not constitute a man. A man must be in the human form. If that form becomes dissipated the man is lost. If a spirit has not the human form it is not a human being. When an animal dies and turns to dust it ceases to exist as an animal. The dust is not the animal. When a tree is consumed in the fire, the ashes and the gases which composed its organic forms are not the tree. Special form and organization are essential qualities of a tree. Consequently, when these are lost the tree is lost. So it is with man. A formless essence or a spirit-force is not a man, because it lacks all the essential human qualities and forms. Neither is the material body the man. It has the form but it lacks the qualities,—the power of feeling, thinking, acting of itself. The material body viewed by itself, is no more a man than a mummy or a marble statue is a man. By man, then, we mean a spiritual being in the human form, capable of love, thought, reason, self-consciousness, intellectual progress, and all the functions of a human being.

The next point which needs to be clearly defined is, what we mean by resurrection. It is evident that we do not mean the collecting together, re-organization, and vivification of the elements which once composed man's material body; for if that were done, it would not be a resurrection of man. We do not mean a return of any vital and formless force—whatever it may be—into the material body. That would not be a resurrection of man,—if by man we mean a spiritual being,—but the reclothing of men with a material body. We mean something very different from these acts. We mean the withdrawal of the man himself from the material body; the putting off of the garment of flesh. That is man's resurrection. It is getting *out* of the material body rather than getting *into* it; it is permitting the body to return to dust rather than collecting the dust together and forming a new body; it is leaving this world and going into the spiritual world, rather than leaving the spiritual world and coming back into this. By the resurrection of man, then, who is a spiritual being in the human form, we mean the raising man out of material conditions by his withdrawal from the material body. Having ascertained the exact point we are endeavoring to establish, let us see what evidence we have that it is true.

1. First let us see what testimony the Lord gives us in His created Word, the material world. It will not require much examination to discover that precisely this process, in principle, is going on all

around us, and that the more complex and excellent things and beings reach the highest state of their existence by successive steps, each one of which is a resurrection of a form which lay enfolded in a lower one, and was clothed by it in the same way that man is invested with a material body. We see this process in the growth of a plant. The stalk is raised up out of the seed; the leaf is raised up from the stem; so are the blossom and the fruit. When we come to the animal kingdom we find these steps more clearly defined. Take, for example, a beautiful moth or butterfly. It is first an egg. In that is formed a worm, which in due time is raised out of it, and which passes through a certain cycle of life. In the worm is found a winged creature, which in due time is raised up out of it into a new world of light and joy. The bird attains the maximum of its powers, and completes the cycle of its life in the same way, though it does not pass through so many stages. It is first an egg. We may say that it is born into this world in the form of an egg, which contains the elements out of which its organization is to be created, and which is its first rude body. When its organization is complete it is raised up out of it into its heaven, where it is to find its home and to attain the complete end or full purpose of its existence.

The same process, in principle, and nearly in form, takes place in the creation of every animal. Its birth into this world is a resurrection from a previous state, which takes place when its organiza-

tion is sufficiently perfected to enable it to live in the world, and to perform the functions for which it was created.

Now, here we find the regular and universal method of the Divine wisdom in creating plants, insects, birds, and animals, and man, also, so far as regards his life in this world. The Lord does not create an insect or an animal or a human being directly and immediately without any agency of intermediate steps. In every instance He begins in the lowest plant and rises from that, and every step is a resurrection of a form from another form within which it was organized. As far as we can see, this is the universal method of the Divine order. Are we not justified in believing that if an animal or a man is to take another distinct step in existence, that it will do it in the same way? Would it not be absurd to suppose that this universal law was departed from as soon as the theatre of action passed beyond our material senses? Such a supposition would be the height of absurdity, unless we could find some positive evidence of its necessity. Every living creature gains the perfection of its organization and the maximum of its power by successive resurrections. Man is no exception to this law, so far as we can follow his progress by our observation. If he is to go any farther, shall he not take the next step according to the same law that he has taken the previous ones? If he does not, there is no logic in the creation, no universal law of Divine action.



There is another view of the teachings of the Lord in nature upon this subject which is worthy of notice, on account of its bearing upon the commonly-received doctrine of the resurrection, which is, that the resurrection of man is the reorganization of his material body, and its revivification by the soul. No such process as this can be found in the creation. No creature ever goes back and re-assumes its former condition. The insect never becomes a worm again. The oak never divests itself of its mighty arms and shrivels its knotty trunk, and gathers the dispersed elements together and becomes an acorn. The sparrow never folds its wings and crawls back into the shell from which it was raised up. If man returns to his material body, he is an anomaly, and an exception to all that the Lord teaches us in His works. There is not a hint in the whole creation that a material body of any kind, once cast off and dissipated, is ever reorganized and reinhabited by the life which created it.

2. Let us now examine the testimony of the Lord in his Word. Let us approach it reverently, not with any desire to wrest it into conformity with any theory, but to learn what the Lord truly teaches upon a subject so vital to human happiness.

The Old Testament is almost wholly silent about it. The first passage to which I will call your attention, and, I believe, the first one in which the subject is alluded to, is found in the 19th chapter of Job, and is as follows: "For I know my Redeemer liveth, and He shall stand at the latter day upon

the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Now, supposing this to be a correct translation of the original, it is not very clear and direct testimony upon the subject, especially when the character and purpose of the Book of Job is taken into account, about which there is much difference of opinion among the best biblical scholars. But if you will turn to your Bibles, you will find in the marginal notes an entirely different version of the original. It is this: "After I shall awake, though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God." This entirely reverses the testimony, and declares his belief that though his body be destroyed, he will preserve the personality of his existence, and "see God." The statement is directly in favor of the point, that man rises out of the material body as a man in the human form, and preserves the continuity of his being. There are great difficulties, however, in the translation of this passage in Job, and the most learned biblical scholars differ in opinion about its meaning. The general conclusion seems to be that there is no reference to the resurrection of the dead. If there is, Job contradicted himself, for he says (vii. 9): "As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more." The most probable opinion is that he simply expresses his belief that the Lord would

redeem him from his afflictions, and that he should see Him in the latter end of his life. And he declares (xlii. 5) that he did see Him: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee."

The next passage in which the subject is alluded to is the following, in the 26th chapter of Isaiah: "Thy dead shall live. My dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead." It is evident from the whole chapter that no allusion is made to a general resurrection of dead bodies, because in a preceding verse it is said, "O Lord our God, other lords besides Thee have had dominion over us. . . . They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore Thou hast visited and destroyed them, and made their memory to perish. Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation." Dying and rising here refers naturally to the Jewish people, but spiritually to the Church, which is said to be dead when devoid of spiritual life, and to be raised up from death when its members begin to live a spiritual life. When regarded in this light, the words state an immutable law of the Divine Order. The other lords who are dead and will not rise are not the "Lord our God." They are evil and false principles. But it is said, "Thy dead shall live." Thy, refers to the Lord, and His dead are those who have died to sin, and are alive to righteousness.

The passage in Daniel which has been quoted to prove the resurrection of the body, has the same meaning, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." These words cannot refer to a general resurrection of the material bodies of men, for it says, "many of them." Limiting the number, and showing that in some way a selection is to be made. If this refers to the national life of the Jews, or to the life of the Church, its meaning is plain. There is a passage in Hosea which is adduced to prove the resurrection of the body: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." The death here referred to is, without doubt, spiritual death, and in this sense it is a statement of a law of the Divine order. By death is meant the death of the soul; and it is that death from which the Lord redeems us. This is all that can be found in the Old Testament, so far as I know, which has even the appearance of favoring the doctrine of the resurrection of the material body, but which has, in fact, no reference to it whatever. There is much said about death and life, but it is the death and life of the soul, and not of the body.

If we examine the New Testament we shall find the same way of presenting the subject, and we shall come to the same conclusion. There was a difference of opinion among the Jews upon the

subject. The Sadducees did not believe in any resurrection, the Pharisees did. But you will notice that when the question came up, our Lord always turned their attention away from a natural to a spiritual resurrection.

In his conversation with the Sadducees, He said, "As touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew xxii. 31, 32). He must refer to the spiritual condition of men. It is often said that the Lord is not the God of the wicked, our God is the being or principle we worship. Those who do not obey the laws of the Lord, do not believe in Him: they are dead to all spiritual life. He is not their God. They do not acknowledge Him; they have chosen another god. Only those who are spiritually alive love Him and worship Him.

We see the same truth set forth, only more clearly, in His conversation with Martha. "Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." She evidently had in her mind the idea of a final resurrection,—but whether of material bodies or not is of no consequence to our argument. Now, if that were the truth, why did not the Lord assent to it? But He did not: He corrected her, and turned her thought to the truth. "Jesus said unto her, I am the resur-

rection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." This cannot be true of the material body. This cannot be true of natural death, for the most devout believers die in that sense as certainly as the most wicked sinners. The Lord must refer to the resurrection of the soul from spiritual death.

Another declaration to the same effect is found in John (v. 28, 29), "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." If this declaration stood by itself, we might conclude that it was a direct assertion of the resurrection of the material body. But in a preceding verse the Lord says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but *is* passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." This cannot refer to any future resurrection of material bodies, for He says "the time now is." But if it means a resurrection from spiritual death, it is a plain and explicit statement of a fact.

So it is in every instance where the subject of the resurrection is referred to in the Gospels. There is something which renders it impossible to interpret

it as teaching the resurrection of the material body. But if by death and resurrection are meant spiritual changes in the soul, the meaning is plain, and accords with the whole of Scripture and with all we know of the Divine laws and methods.

The testimony of the apostles in their epistles to the Church is to the same effect, though not so clearly given as that of our Lord Himself. The testimony which is relied upon as the most conclusive for the resurrection of the material body is contained in the 15th chapter of Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. His line of argument is this: he first proves that our Lord rose from the dead, and on that fact bases the certainty of man's resurrection. If this is not so, he says, then those who have fallen asleep have perished,—that is, their existence has ceased. But it is evident that he does not mean by death, in this argument, the death of the material body, or, to say the least, he does not limit his meaning to that. "For," he says, "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." This death and this making alive cannot refer to the material body, because men did not die physically in Adam, nor are they made physically alive by Christ. Physical death is not caused by sin. If man had never sinned he would have thrown off his material garment, and have passed on into the spiritual world. It is the soul that dies by sin, and the soul that is raised up from spiritual death. Therefore, Paul says, in the midst of this argument, "I die daily;" and another time he exclaims, when tor-



mented by the conflicts between good and evil within him, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" What death? of the material body? No; he rather longed for that. It was the death of sin. He clearly distinguishes between the inward man, who was alive, and the outward man, who was active enough, but dead in sin. Again he says, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin." He cannot mean the material body here.

Much confusion has been caused in relation to this whole question by assuming that death primarily relates to the material body, and that there is no other body. A careful examination of the subject in the whole of Scripture will show that neither of these assumptions are true. Death and the dead generally relate to man as a spiritual being; and Paul himself declares that there is a spiritual body. To the objector who asks, "How are the dead raised up? and with what bodies do they come?" he replies, Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die. That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be. . . . God gives to every seed his own body. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. The glory of the heavenly is one, the glory of the earthly is another. So is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there

is a spiritual body.” Now here he declares that the body sown is not the body raised, and he illustrates his meaning with a natural fact which is familiar to all. The seed we plant is never raised. Another body is raised out of it. Our Lord says the same thing: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.” Paul says there are various kinds of bodies. The natural body dies, the spiritual body rises.

This is precisely the doctrine of the New Church. The material body dies and turns to dust, and its substances become dissipated among the elements. This is the law of all growth, of all creation. There are no exceptions to it. It is never raised up again. But another body is raised out of it. Being, existence, implies organization. A spiritual being implies a spiritual body. It implies it as certainly before the resurrection as after it. The material body cannot think and feel, love and hate.

Here is a point which is worthy of a moment's consideration. Organization originates no power. It only manifests and directs it. The most accurately constructed machine will not move of itself. A plant has no power to grow of itself. Exclude heat and light from it and its growth is arrested. So it is with the material body. Sever its connection with the soul, and it has no more power of motion than the stone in the street. This is the universal law. It is also a universal law, that the kind of life or force manifested will depend upon

the kind of body used for the purpose. You cannot make a machine which can think and feel, love and understand. To do these things requires a spiritual body. A material organism can be moved by material forces, but it requires a spiritual organism to receive and communicate spiritual forces and qualities. There must, therefore, be a spiritual body within the material one, and entirely distinct from it, or we could exercise no spiritual qualities now. If this principle were carried out, it would show why we are clothed in a material body in this world, and why, in the nature of things, we cannot live in one in the spiritual world.

But let us see to what conclusions the testimony of the Lord in His Word lead us. I do not hesitate to say that, when all the passages which allude to the subject of death and resurrection are collated and combined, and their genuine meaning is learned, there is not a particle of evidence in the Bible that the material body will ever be raised up in any form or manner. There is no more evidence of it in the Lord's Word than there is in His works. Neither of them utter any word or give any hint that such a resurrection is possible.

But if there is any room for doubt from the peculiar manner in which the Scriptures speak upon the subject, there is another kind of testimony in the Sacred Scriptures which ought to be conclusive. They reveal to us the important fact that, although the resurrection of the material bodies has not taken place, human beings who once lived in this world

are now living in the spiritual world; and, in one case at least, they have been identified as the very persons who were once men upon the earth. At the time of His transfiguration, Moses and Elias appeared in glory talking with the Lord of His de-cease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Here is a distinct declaration that two men who had been dead, in the common meaning of the word, for hundreds of years, were still living, as human beings, in the human form, for they could talk with the Lord. They had preserved their identity. Moses was Moses still, and Elias was Elias still. They were recognized by the Lord Himself, who could not be deceived upon the subject. The logical and only conclusion must be, if one man can live in the spiritual world and preserve his identity, all men can.

But this is not the only instance. In the Revelation John testifies that he saw people from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation who had been redeemed, having harps and golden vials full of incense, singing a new song to the Lord for their redemption. Again, he says, "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them." Afterwards he saw a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and

kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. John was asked by one of the elders who these people were who were arrayed in white robes, and whence came they. "And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. vii. 9).

Here is proof of our continued existence as human beings in the human form, before the resurrection, which is often demanded, and which, it is acknowledged, would be satisfactory. "If we could only get some trustworthy information concerning the condition of those who have passed behind the veil of flesh," it is often said, "it would dispel our doubts and quiet our fears, and convince us of the reality of a future existence." Here is the testimony demanded, testimony which all who believe the Bible to be the Word of God must accept. It is explicit and directly to the point.

These beings whom John saw were souls; but they were not ghosts, or formless essences, or abstract vital principles; they were in the human form; they had bodies; they had feet and stood upon them; they had hands and used them; they had heads, ears, and eyes, and vocal organs, for they could hear, and see, and converse with each other;

they could sing and articulate words; wear garments, and perform all the functions and hold all the relations of human beings.

They also came from this world; they were those "who had been slain for the Word of God and the testimony which they held;" they were those who came out of great tribulation. They must, therefore, have come from this world. They were not isolated cases. There was "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues."

You cannot fail to see the bearing of these facts upon our argument. They were not in their material bodies. Their bodies had died and turned to dust. And yet they had bodies; they were human beings in the human form, and they were in the spiritual world. Their bodies must, therefore, have been spiritual; they had preserved their identity; they knew what they had experienced in this world. They were the same beings who had lived in this world. If they had bodies adapted to all their wants in the spiritual world, why should they desire to be reclothed in a material garment? Would they be any more real, substantial, human? Certainly not. On the contrary, it would be bringing them back to the limitations of time and space.

I know it is supposed that the resurrection body will be vastly superior to the old one. But what evidence is there of the truth of this supposition? None whatever. On the contrary, it can easily be

shown that no better body can be made out of material substances than has been made. The nature of matter limits its excellence. And the nature of God demands that it should be the best that infinite wisdom and almighty power could frame out of the materials. Infinite love and wisdom must from its very nature do its best.

How absurd to suppose that the Lord gave man a poor, frail, imperfect body, subject to disease and pain and dissolution, when He could have made one which would be free from all these imperfections! How derogatory to the Lord's goodness is the supposition that He gave to man an organism full of defects, and which must soon wear out and become resolved into its original elements; and when they had been dispersed for thousands of years, that He should re-collect and organize them into another body, having none of the imperfections and possessing vastly greater excellencies than the first, and bring back the soul and introduce it into this new habitation! We may take either horn of the dilemma. If the Lord could make a better body out of material substances, why did He not do it at first? How could He subject us to all the ills which flesh is heir to: to feebleness, to wasting, to pain, to agony, to dissolution, when He could have saved us from all these sorrows? Would you excuse a mechanic for making you a garment which would be a cause of discomfort; which would not protect you from cold and storm; and which would soon perish, on the ground that he would do better



the next time you employed him? No. His excuse itself would condemn him.

If the Lord cannot reconstruct a better material body out of the elements of the former one, why should He attempt it? What is there in the nature of man as a spiritual being—what want of power, what lack of form, what imperfection of state—which demands his re-incarceration in the prison-house of clay? None whatever. He is a man: he is in the human form: he is free from the limitations of time and space and the weight of a material body, and he is in a world as much superior to this as mind is superior to matter. Such a change would be to man's free, rejoicing spirit what it would be to the sparrow rejoicing in the freedom of flight and pouring forth its joy in song, to hush its voice, fold its wings, close its eyes to the light, and return to the narrow limits of its shell. If the proposition were made to that innumerable company whose earthly garments have turned to dust, and who have entered into the perfections of a conscious and distinct spiritual life, to come back to earth and take upon themselves a material body, it would silence every song in heaven, and fill the heart of every glorified spirit with consternation and despair. No, no, it cannot be. There is nothing in the nature of the earth; there is nothing in the nature of man; there is no principle in the Divine love and wisdom, or hint in its revelation to man, which demands such a reversal of all the Divine methods or renders it possible.

It is because of the inherent imperfections of a material world and of material substances that the Lord provided, from the beginning, that man should not be subject to its limitations forever. Matter is hard, cold, dead. It is a weight; it is a hindrance. The material world is too small for a single soul. We are

“Cabined, cribbed, confined”

in it. The Lord created us for something purer, lovelier, and better adapted to the development of our spiritual faculties, the free play of heavenly affections, and the full fruition of immortal hopes, than a material world could ever be, if every man was a saint, every woman an angel, and every home a paradise.

From whatever point of view we regard the subject, whether from reason or Revelation, from the Divine methods of creating in the material universe, from the nature of man, and the perfections of the Lord, we see that the resurrection of man from his material body, never again to be inhabited by him, is a law of the Divine order, a part of the plan of infinite love and wisdom, for the perfection and happiness of His children.

This resurrection takes place at the time of the death of the material body. It is the cause of its death. The material body never had any life of its own. The material eye never saw, the material ear never heard, the material hand never had any power of its own to move and feel. The material

body never had any power to preserve its organization, even. Consequently, when man leaves it, it returns to the ground whence it originated, and the man who has used it for a temporary purpose—for the same purpose that a seed uses the ground in which it is planted—rises out of it in a spiritual body, which had been formed in the material one, into a new world, which is to be his home forever, and in which he is to find the widest field for the development of all his faculties and the most excellent and ample means for the attainment of every good he is capable of receiving.

But every one rises in the spiritual world the same being he was when he left this. He is no better and no worse. He gains no knowledge by the mere act of resurrection. The continuity of his existence is not broken; he preserves his self-consciousness and individuality. In that world all the human beings who have dwelt in this world and have passed away from it are gathered.

One by one, from all parts of the earth, they have taken their places and come under the power of those influences which will open the book of their life, reveal their true characters, and, by secret but irresistible currents of power, will carry them to their places. Here the Judgment must be held, and its inevitable decrees be carried into execution.

## LECTURE XI.

### THE LAST JUDGMENT: WHERE IT WAS HELD AND HOW IT WAS EFFECTED.

“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”—Hebrews ix. 27.

It was the purpose of my last lecture to show that man's resurrection is essentially a continuance of his conscious and individual life. It consists in divesting himself of the material body which allies him to the material world, veils his spiritual senses, and subjects him to the limitations of time and space. By this unclothing of his spiritual body he gains open and conscious entrance into the spiritual world where he is to find his eternal home. In this world, therefore, are gathered all the human beings who have been born upon the earth, and have passed away from it, from the beginning of creation to the present time. The spiritual world, therefore, must be the grand judgment-hall in which all assemble and are judged.

But this world cannot consist simply of one region where all assemble and permanently remain, there being only a simple division to the right and left of the Lord. If, as we have stated in a former lecture and as the very nature of human life demands, those who dwell in the spiritual world are most distinctly

organized into societies according to their peculiar character, and if the outward world is the projection of the inward qualities of the inhabitants, there must be the greatest diversity of societies, and the world itself must be a cosmos composed of many realms of being.

If the resurrection of man consists simply in his withdrawal from the material body and introduction into the spiritual world, he must rise there the same being he was before his resurrection. He has gained no knowledge and no goodness by the simple act of changing worlds. The character of the great majority of human beings is composed of mixed elements. Few are wholly good or wholly evil when they leave this world. If they were, there would be no need of a judgment. They would be judged already. "He that believeth not is condemned already."

There is, therefore, good grounds for the belief that when we enter the spiritual world we occupy a region between heaven and hell, where all assemble and dwell until they are prepared for their final home. That there is such a region is as plainly taught in the Scriptures as it is that there is a heaven and a hell. *Sheol*, in the Old Testament, and *hades*, which is its equivalent in the New Testament, distinctly designate this intermediate world. They are sometimes translated "grave," and sometimes "hell," which, every one can see, are very different states. In most cases, at least, the subjects with which they are connected require the meaning of an intermediate state.

This region is not the Catholic Purgatory; nor is it, strictly speaking, a place and season of probation. The principles, which will determine the character and action there, have been formed in this world. In the intermediate state they are only freed from everything which is not homogeneous to them and developed into their proper character and form. The Judgment, therefore, must be effected in the spiritual world. There the true character is revealed; there everything which is not congenial to it is eliminated. Every evil and falsity is rejected by those who are essentially good, and every appearance of goodness and every semblance of truth is cast aside by those who are evil at heart.

The manner in which the Judgment is effected is fully described in the disclosures which Swedenborg has made concerning the spiritual world and the life of man after his resurrection. According to them, it is one of the grandest and most beautiful displays of the Divine love and wisdom which has ever been manifested in the Lord's dealings with men. Instead of being the most terrible exhibition of wrath and arbitrary power, as is generally believed, it is the embodiment of the gentlest mercy, and the most tender regard for every one, the evil as well as the good, upon whom the Judgment is executed. It consists simply in the arrangement of the inhabitants of the intermediate world into homogeneous societies, in which they can find their greatest happiness or least misery, and are prepared for their final home. In doing this every man's nature and

-freedom are respected. No violence is offered to any one. His essential nature is simply developed, and then he goes where that will carry him.

Judgment is of two kinds, individual and general. Some men and women are so fully the embodiments of good or evil principles when they leave this world that they do not tarry long in the intermediate state. They passed out of that while they were in this world. Their natures became so fully homogeneous that there was little of evil or falsity to put off by the good, and not much apparent goodness and truth to be rejected by the wicked. Everything which is not germane to the root principles of their nature rests lightly upon them, and the more powerful forces of the spiritual world disperses it, as a summer's sun the morning mists. These do not tarry in the intermediate state; they pass on without delay to their final home in heaven or hell.

A general Judgment takes place at the end of every age. As I have stated in a former lecture, the fall and the rise of the race advances by distinct steps. Certain principles become incorporated in human life, and are worked out to their legitimate results. It may require thousands of years to do it, and involve the rise and fall of many kingdoms. The people may pass through a great variety of phases, in some of which there may be great improvements in many respects or sad declensions. It matters not. The age moves on to its end with sure steps. And when the end comes there is a Judgment. The accounts of that age are closed,



its affairs are settled, and a new era commences. There have been more than one such age, and consequently more than one general Judgment. One of them is described in symbolic language, by the flood in the time of Noah. Another took place at the end of the Jewish Age, when our Lord was upon the earth in the flesh. He referred to it Himself. "For judgment," He says, "I am come into this world." "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." When "the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name," "He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning falling from heaven." This Judgment was effected upon all who remained in the intermediate state, from the beginning to the end of that Age. Let us consider the reason for this long delay. It can only be found in the Lord's infinitely tender regard for man, and in man's condition when he is raised up into the spiritual world.

The Lord is not impatient to judge and condemn men. He regards every one with infinite love, and always does everything in His power for human happiness, either in this life or in the life to come. He respects our freedom, also. He seeks to lead man to act as of himself; and He never molests him or does violence to his nature so long as man refrains from evil. Even then He only seeks to restrain him from sinking into deeper evils and suffering keener misery, and He does this, not by arbitrary authority or violent force, but according to the laws of the

Divine order in which the power of the Spirit of Truth acts in secret and manifold ways to give to man all the good he will receive, and to lead him to heaven. A knowledge of the character of those who had been pouring into the spiritual world from the beginning of the Christian era will give us a clearer idea of the Lord's mercy, and will show us how and why the Last Judgment was executed.

It is not difficult to gain an accurate general knowledge of the people who passed into the spiritual world during the first Christian Age, for we have some true knowledge of them from history and from our own observation, though there has been a vast improvement in the general character of the people since the Last Judgment took place. We can gain as accurate knowledge of their character after their resurrection as before, because they are the same beings. No more change is wrought in their minds by simply divesting them of the material body than there is in a sparrow by breaking from its shell. They hold to the same religious doctrines that they believed in this world. They have the same ideas about God, heaven, hell, the conditions of salvation, the proper forms of worship, that they had while here. They are just as ignorant of spiritual truth. They retain all their prejudices against others, and biases in favor of themselves and their own modes and forms of worship. They are merely transferred to a new country.

We know that the people, even in Christian

countries, were in a state of the grossest ignorance with regard to all knowledge, especially the knowledge of spiritual truth. There were no Bibles accessible to the people. Men were burnt at the stake for translating the Bible into the English language and working to get it into circulation among the people. The rulers and teachers in the Church are truly described by our Lord when He said, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matthew xxiii. 13). There were no books in general circulation, and no schools in which the common people could be instructed. Many of the priests, even, could not read. It is difficult, if not impossible, for us to form any adequate conception of the spiritual darkness and corruption of the Christian Age, through many centuries, down even to modern times. They were justly called "the Dark Ages."

These men and women, priests and people, were pouring into the spiritual world generation after generation, and forming societies there. There were, doubtless, many good men and women among them. But, unless all history is false, the greater part of those who professed to be Christians were so only in name. Religion was a matter of verbal assent to certain doctrines which they did not understand, and the performance of the external rites of worship. Spiritual life, which consists in love to the Lord and the neighbor, had died out of the

Church, and left only a dead body of dogmas which were not understood, and of rituals which were "the mint, anise, and cummin" of worship, while the "weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" were omitted. It was this destitution of spiritual life which caused the end of that Age.

But we need not go back some centuries to get a true idea of the character of the vast multitude which had assembled in the spiritual world. We have only to look around us and reflect upon the character of those with whom we are acquainted, and who are constantly passing away from earth, and entering upon the life beyond the grave. Men and women of all characters, and all religious opinions; infants and children, and young men and women, are migrating to that world every day. If we keep in mind that they are the same beings when they awake to conscious life in the spiritual world that they were when they left this, we cannot avoid the conclusion that the inhabitants must be composed of the most incongruous elements. We have only to add to this company a few shades of ignorance, bigotry, and intolerance, and we have before us the people upon whom the Last Judgment was executed.

But we must not conceive of this multitude as a vast mass-meeting houseless and homeless, surging around some common centre, and waiting with impatience or fear to have their case decided. The spiritual world we must not forget, is a most real and substantial world. Its inhabitants have their

distinct homes, which are contiguous or remote from each other, according to similitudes of character. Consequently, there must be vast cities compared with which the largest earthly cities are mere hamlets. They have their societies and temples of worship; they teach their doctrines, have their employments, mingle as freely with one another as they choose, and in all respects live a real life.

Those who had been externally moral and devout, continued to be so. They frequented their temples and were zealous in instructing the simple and ignorant in their doctrines. They entered into their ideas of heaven. They occupied elevated positions and thought they were in heaven. So long as their internal character remained quiescent, and was concealed by correct moral conduct and a devout exterior, they were not molested; and they performed a use in instructing the ignorant, welcoming those who were constantly arriving from this world, and in many other ways adapted to the conditions and wants of the people around them.

We must keep in mind, also, that all those who were good at heart, and whose external life was brought into conformity with their internal character, and all infants and children, were taken to heaven; and that those who were wholly wicked, in external form as well as in internal principle, went to their infernal abodes. This left two classes in the intermediate state, one of which was composed of those who were internally evil and externally good; and the other, of those who were internally

good but externally in ignorance, and who only needed instruction and the development of their internal nature to fit them for heaven. Multitudes were like children. They were simply ignorant of all spiritual knowledge. They had not known the Lord's will, and consequently they would be "beaten with few stripes." They had not destroyed the germs of spiritual life, and consequently were capable of being instructed and raised to heaven. They were of simple minds, incapable of spiritual discernment. They judged men according to their appearance, as multitudes do at the present time. They revered their leaders; those who appeared to be devout they believed to be so, and accorded to them the honor and authority which they claimed.

But Swedenborg's description of those who dwelt in what is called in the Word the "first heaven," which was situated in this intermediate state, and which those who formed it considered it to be heaven itself, is so graphic and so true to the well-known character of professing Christians, especially during the last centuries of that Age, that we will give it in his own words: "Its inhabitants were those who lived in the world in external, and never in internal, sanctity; who were just and sincere for the sake of civil and moral laws, but not for the sake of Divine laws, therefore, who were external or natural, and not internal or spiritual men; who also were in the doctrinals of the Church, and who were able to teach them, but whose lives were not accordant with them; and who filled

various offices, and did uses, but not for the sake of uses. These, and all throughout the whole world who were like them, constituted the first heaven.

“This heaven therefore was such as the world and Church upon earth is, among those who do good, not because it is good, but because they fear the laws, and the loss of fame, honor, and lucre; they who do good from no other origin, do not fear God, but men, and are destitute of conscience. In the first heaven of the Reformed, there was a large proportion of spirits, who believed that man is saved by faith alone, and did not live the life of charity; and who loved much to be seen of men. In all these spirits, so long as they were associated together, the interiors were closed, that they might not appear; but when the Last Judgment was at hand, they were opened; and it was then found that inwardly they were obsessed by falses and evils of every kind, and that they were against the Divine, and were actually in hell; for every one after death is immediately bound to his like, the good to their like in heaven, but to the evil to their like in hell, yet they do not go to them before the interiors are unveiled; in the mean time they may live together in society with those who resemble them in externals.”

This state and the reason for its existence is described in the parable of the tares and wheat, which are so intimately connected that the tares cannot be pulled up without destroying the wheat also. Both



must grow together, therefore, until the harvest, which is the end of the Age.

Such was the character of the people who were to be judged. The good and the evil were so intimately connected that they could not be forcibly separated by the application of omnipotent power, until their real characters had become so fully developed that they were evident to all. Every principle and quality of man's spiritual nature, whether it be good or evil, gains strength by exercise. Men cannot always wear the mask. "There is nothing covered which shall not be revealed." As the character of the people in this world became more corrupt, the vast procession of human beings who were moving into the intermediate state would swell the numbers of those who remained there, and inflame their evil passions until they would seek to bring every one into subjection to their will. There is no limit to the arrogance and claims of homage by the love of self. If Milton had laid the scenes of his "Paradise Lost" in the intermediate state, it would have been in many respects a remarkably true description of the character of those upon whom the Last Judgment was performed, and of the scenes which occurred during its execution. It is not a long step from assuming the office of vicegerent of God in this world to the claim of being God Himself in the world to come. Every one who has any accurate knowledge of human nature can see what results would be inevitable, if those who are openly and decidedly principled in

goodness and truth were removed from any people, and only those who loved themselves and the world, and the simple-minded who do not think for themselves, remained. The only restraint upon the leading minds of such a people would be their machinations against one another, and the fear of losing their power. A society, whether in this world or any other, large or small, composed of such elements, contains within itself the forces which must inevitably destroy it. They are antagonistic in their essential nature, and "a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand."

But there is another cause for the breaking up and destruction of societies and kingdoms composed of the conflicting elements of evil and falsity. The Lord does not stand by as an idle spectator of the conflicts of the evil with the good, or of the evil with the evil. He has not given up the government of men to certain laws with which He cannot in any manner interfere or regulate. Law has no power. It is simply the way in which the Lord accomplishes His purposes. He has an infinite reserve of power which He can bring to bear upon any condition of society, either in this life or the other, when in His infinite wisdom He sees that the preservation or extension of His kingdom requires it. He manifests His infinite mercy and truth as much by withholding His power as He does by the exercise of it. There is no fuller or more beautiful exhibition of the Divine love and wisdom than in the precision with which means are adapted to ends, and the ex-

quisite care with which the Lord withholds His power, when a larger influx of it would hurt men. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth." He allowed those who were dwelling in the intermediate state to remain there as long as they could preserve even the semblance of goodness. He was in no haste to uncover their iniquity and expose their hypocrisy. He moderated the influx of His Divine power that they might not be disturbed by it. He was in no haste to send them away to their dreary abodes. He did the best He could for them.

But when the Age had come to an end, and those who composed it had been gathered into the spiritual world, and could no longer render any service to one another; when the wicked could not be kept even in the semblance of good, the time for the Judgment had come. The harvest was ripe; there would be no more growth, and nothing remained but to gather it in.

How this Judgment was effected, and the World of Spirits was cleared of this vast multitude of people, remains to be considered. Evidently it was not done by a merely spoken word. That would be too mechanical, too much like a human tribunal, and would not be adequate to the result. It is truly described as due to the Coming of the Lord, and the consequent opening of the book of every life. It was caused by a more powerful action of the Divine forces upon the minds of that vast multitude; by

which they were brought face to face with the truth, and their real characters were revealed. To understand the effect of such a disclosure of the inward wickedness of the inhabitants of this world, it is necessary to keep in mind two great laws which we see in operation in this world, but which act without any restriction in the spiritual world.

The first is this: In the other life the outward world is the perfect reflex of the inward life. It is a projection of the affections and thoughts. The outward is related to the inward as effect to cause. This is true in this world to a very great extent. Men are always trying to make the outward world correspond to their affections and knowledge. But matter is hard to overcome, and for this reason even the wisest and most powerful can reduce the outward to the inward state only in a small degree. We see the principle, however, in the differences in dress, habitation, the plants and animals which exist, between savage and enlightened nations. But in the spiritual world the correspondence is perfect. It extends to the minutest particulars, and involves the earth on which the people dwell, and the whole outward world around them.

The other point is the relation of the people to the Divine forces which give them life. I have spoken of this principle in a former lecture. All the power of life is a constant gift from the Lord, and is adjusted with the most exquisite exactness and delicacy to man's spiritual and natural organism. Any diminution of the forces of life would leave

him correspondingly weak and incapable of action. Any large increase of vital power would torment and consume him. It would have the same effect that an intense light has upon a weak and inflamed eye.

By drawing near to the inhabitants who were in this intermediate state between heaven and hell, there would be a more powerful inflowing of the Divine forces into their spiritual organisms. These forces would come as light uncovering the hypocrisies and revealing the true characters of those who were inwardly evil. This could not fail to cause a separation between the wicked and those who had been deceived by their feigned goodness. The good at heart would be horrified at the revelation of such wickedness, and the hypocrites would be covered with shame and confusion. It would require no almighty power to drive these two classes asunder. The good would withdraw from horror, and the wicked would flee from shame. The same principles would operate to drive them asunder that we see in operation in this life.

But there would be a more potent cause of separation than these. Truth is not only a light, it is a Divine force repelling those who are not in harmony with it, and attracting those who are. By bringing this vast and incongruous multitude of people more directly under the influence of the Lord, the Spirit of Truth would have more direct access to them. The good would hail the new power with delight, and would be drawn by its

sweet attractions towards heaven and the Lord. At the same time, the wicked would be tormented by it, and would flee to escape the suffering. By these influences the separation of the good from the wicked would be accomplished.

These great changes were not effected in a moment by the application of arbitrary power. Every step was taken according to the laws of infinite wisdom, and with the most tender regard for every member of that great company, the evil as well as the good. The whole book of Revelation is employed in describing, in prophetic symbols, the preparation for the Judgment, the manner in which it was executed, and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. Some of the scenes which are described in that book literally took place in the spiritual world. Indeed, it was distinctly said to John, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter" (Rev. iv. 1). The great cosmical commotions and changes which are attributed to the Second Coming were effected there. There were great earthquakes, "the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid them-

selves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" As the objective world, in a spiritual state of being, is created by the states of life of the people, it would change as their states changed. Any great spiritual commotion would cause earthquakes, and changes in the visible heavens. When the inhabitants fled, the earth and the heavens would depart, for they are but the shadow of the substantial thoughts and affections which exist in the mind. The men who had claimed office and honor in the Church, and had professed affection for the Lord and the neighbor, but who were hypocrites, could not bear the approach of the Lord and the holy angels. The power of His love and wisdom would be intolerable to them. Their minds would be filled with terror. It would be a day of torment to them; it would be the overthrow of all their power, the unmasking of their true characters, and the destruction of all their hopes.

So the Age was consummated both in this world and in the other. The World of Spirits was cleared of the vast multitude which had gathered there during many generations, and they went where the attractions of their characters would take them, and they joined those who were of a like nature with themselves.

But this event, grand and important as it was in



itself and in its bearings upon those who were personally affected by it, is still more important in its effects upon the inhabitants of the earth. The Judgment was only one of the collateral effects of the Second Coming. It consisted essentially in removing the obstacles and preparing the way for the Lord's Coming to men in the power and glory of spiritual truth. But to see this clearly, we must understand how the people, who are in the intermediate state, stand related to the inhabitants of this world.

It is, as we have seen, the first state upon which men enter after their resurrection, and, consequently, it is but slightly removed from their spiritual condition before their resurrection. The inhabitants of the World of Spirits are, therefore, near to us. They are only one step removed from us. In one way, and in an important sense, they stand between us and the Lord as He seeks to come to us through heaven by the instrumentality of the angels. They are intermediates between us and Him, and the angels, and according to their character they transmit, or they obstruct and pervert the light of the Divine truth and the life of the Divine love in its transmission to men upon the earth. Their minds are in intimate contact with our minds, and their influence inflames our passions, or quickens our love for goodness and truth, darkens or clarifies our understanding, according to its quality. Our minds are penetrated and imbued with their life. When that is evil and their sphere powerful, we

are hurried away in the currents of their influence into evil and error. They form the spiritual atmosphere we breathe, the light in which we see, and the spiritual climate in which we live. Their influence is, therefore, constant, though imperceptible, and when evil, it perverts our affections, darkens our understandings, and poisons the very springs of life.

Their power over men had become so great, before the Last Judgment, that men had nearly lost the consciousness that they were spiritual beings. A belief in the substantial existence of the spiritual world had nearly died out from the human mind, and even now it is only slowly reviving. Men were taught that their salvation depended upon formal assent to certain doctrines which they did not understand, rather than upon a heavenly life; the love of goodness and truth waxed cold and iniquity abounded. Spiritual life was suffocated in the mephitic exhalations which poured into the minds of men from that vast Stygian lake. A spiritual stupor was induced which rendered men almost incapable of exercising any spiritual faculty, or feeling any interest in those questions which related to their spiritual welfare.

By the breaking up and dispersion of these societies the equilibrium between good and evil, by which man is kept in freedom, was regained; order was restored in the spiritual world; the heavens were strengthened by the accession of those who could be received into them, and the incorrigibly

wicked were removed from direct intercourse with men in this world and put under restraint. The spiritual atmosphere which men who were still in the material body breathed was purified, the clouds which obscured the light of Divine truth were dispersed, and all the Divine forces, which act upon men and constitute their life, could reach them more directly and work out in them more efficiently the accomplishment of the Lord's purposes of good to them. These influences tended to wake man from his spiritual stupor, to abate the force of evil, to weaken the bonds of error, to clarify his understanding, and give him power to see spiritual truth in rational light. The Spirit of Truth could gain freer access to the human mind, and awake it to the consciousness of its own nature and capacities, and vivify its affections with new life.

By the Last Judgment a most important change was effected in man's spiritual relations, and in the aspect of the human mind to the reception of those Divine forces which constitute its life. The heavens drew nearer to man, bringing with them their love and purity, their harmony and peace. The hells, with their hate and strife and poisonous breath, receded, and a freer, more direct, and larger way was opened for the Lord to come to man in the power and glory of His truth and love.

Such is a brief and general statement of the doctrines of the New Church concerning the Last Judgment, which, according to them, took place in the spiritual world more than a century ago.

It is so contrary to common opinion, and involves so many things concerning the condition of human beings and their relations to each other in the spiritual world, that it cannot but seem strange and, perhaps, improbable to those who believe that the Final Judgment is to take place in this world, is to be effected by the Lord in person, and is to be attended with the most stupendous convulsions of nature. It may seem especially strange that this great event took place more than a century ago.

But, as we have shown in former lectures, the literal account of the Second Coming and, consequently, of the Judgment, cannot be true in all its particulars. Those who accept the disclosures of Swedenborg concerning the other life, find his account of the Judgment to be eminently credible in itself, fully in accordance with all known laws of man's nature, consistent with the Divine character, and the purposes of infinite love and the methods of infinite wisdom. The more critically it is examined in all its bearings, in the light of reason and revelation, the more clearly it will be verified. If the doctrine is true, there must be distinct evidences of it in human society. So great a change in the quality and force of the influences which are constantly acting upon the sources of man's life, could not be made without having a powerful influence upon his condition in this world. He must wake to new life and energy, and all his activities must take a new and a more heavenly direction.

## LECTURE XII.

### THE NEW AGE: ITS CAUSE; THE SIGNS OF ITS COMING, AND THE QUALITIES WHICH CHARACTERIZE IT.

“Now learn a parable of the fig-tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.”—Matthew xxiv. 32, 33.

It was the purpose of my last lecture to state where the final Judgment was held, upon whom it was executed, and how it was effected. If the doctrine upon this subject there set forth be true, the effects of so great a change in such a vast community, holding the most intimate relations to the inhabitants of the material world must, sooner or later, become clearly manifest in human society upon the earth. That great multitude of people, organized into societies and creating an earth and heavens in the intermediate state, according to spiritual laws, was interposed between men upon the earth and the Divine source of all their power and life. They surrounded men on the spiritual side of their natures and stood between them and the Lord. They obstructed the light of truth which comes from Him from flowing into the understanding, as a dense cloud obstructs the light of the sun from flowing into the material eye; they perverted and poisoned the life which issues in an ever-flowing

current from the Fountain of Life, so that it only reached the human heart in diminished power and impaired quality. All man's spiritual affections were like seeds and plants in the winter: they were torpid and dormant. As a spiritual being, man dwelt in winter and night.

When these obstructions to the inflowing of the forces of the Divine life were removed, and man was brought into more direct and orderly communication with the sources of power, human society must have felt and manifested their effects. Every human faculty—especially the higher faculties—must have been quickened by this new influx of power. Man's affections would arouse from their torpor; his intellectual faculties would awake from their sleep, and there would be a general vivification and stir in all the elements of human society. Humanity would be like the ground in the spring, when the earth turns herself more directly to the sun and receives into her bosom, in larger measure, those forces of heat which penetrate her substance and move every organic form to action. If this great event took place, as we have said, more than a century ago, there must be manifest evidences of it in the world. It is as impossible for the human mind, which was made to be the reception of the Divine life, and to move in harmony with the flow of its forces, to remain inactive under their influence, as it would be for the living seeds of plants to remain dormant when sown in good ground and exposed to the genial warmth of the sun. It is just as impossible

that there should be any new or more accelerated movement in human progress without the influx of new power. We have, therefore, in the history of the last century the means of determining with absolute certainty whether or not the human mind has become subject to any new and more powerful influences. If it has, it must be due to the removal of obstacles which choked the current of those Divine forces which give man all his power and life. For we cannot for a moment admit that the Lord withholds His life. Like the sun, He sends forth the warmth of His love and the light of His truth with unchanging fidelity to all who will receive it. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Let us, therefore, glance—and we can do no more than glance—at the present state of human society in the world, and note some of its most marked characteristics. We shall find all the testimony a truly rational mind can demand for the fact that some new and more benign power is operating upon the human mind.

Every thoughtful observer, whose mind is not darkened by error and held in bondage by inveterate prejudices, is conscious that we live in a remarkable age. The student of history knows that man has made more progress during the last century in knowledge, in the application of physical forces to human use, and in organizing societies to help the sick and suffering, and to improve the condition of the race, than was done before during



the whole period of man's existence upon the earth. There must be an adequate cause for these wonderful effects, and that cause must be a spiritual one. As all power comes from the Lord, and is constantly given, every healthful increase of activity in the movements of human society must be due to the nearer approach of the Lord to man, and to a more direct application of the Divine life to human minds. The forces which are now quickening humanity and stimulating men to larger efforts are constantly given. Man, viewed as an individual or a race, is not wound up like a clock with sufficient force to run a certain time and then left to himself. There is no more power in one generation to communicate its life to another than there is in one machine to create another machine; than there was in the teakettle, which suggested the power of steam, to develop itself into the miracle of the modern engine. All power is constantly given. Steam must be constantly created or the engine would soon cease to move; the stream must constantly flow or the wheels will cease to revolve; the forces of the sun must constantly quicken the plant or its growth will be arrested; the Divine life must continue to operate upon the forms of the human mind; a moment's withholding of its power would cause a total suspension of human consciousness. Any increase in human activity must, therefore, be due to an increase in man's capacity for the reception of power from the Lord. In natural things we need no other evidence than the effects to prove

the increase or diminution of the acting force. If the engine moves faster or with more vigorous strokes, we conclude with infallible certainty that more steam is exerting its power; if the trees begin to put forth leaves and clothe themselves with the glory of blossoms, we say the light and heat of the sun are acting with more energy upon them. So we may conclude with infallible certainty that Divine forces are acting with more power upon men when we see new and more vigorous movements in society, especially if they tend to enlighten, to elevate, and to bless.

This is the force of the parable of the fig-tree. In it we see a picture of the effects of the Second Coming portrayed by the Lord Himself. He selects from the material world one of His common works with which we all are familiar, and presents it to men as a perfect embodiment of the principle and method of his Second Coming. It is more than a comparison: it is the problem solved before our eyes at every returning summer. In this beautiful and simple way the Lord demonstrates to us that His Second Coming is not any intervention of His established order, or subversion of universal methods; but, on the contrary, is carrying them into fuller and larger effect. Humanity is beginning to turn to the Lord from the long night of error and from the winter of evil, and we know that a more vigorous and excellent life must be the result. The Lord is coming, not by personal and outward presence, but in the power and glory of new truth,

as the sun comes in spring and summer, not by bodily approach, but in the power of his light and heat.

Such is the principle and method of the Lord's coming to man, as stated by Himself. We may see the subject more clearly, perhaps, by looking at the signs of His coming as they appear in the movements of the times. But in doing this, we must take some Divine purpose, and some method of Divine operation to be a measure of effects, or we cannot come to a logical conclusion.

It must be the purpose of a Being of infinite love and wisdom to give to man the largest amount and the highest degree of good possible. The Lord Himself reiterates this purpose in various forms and in the most emphatic manner. He declares His purpose to establish His kingdom on the earth; to have His will done on the earth as it is in heaven. To this end He declares that a true knowledge of God shall prevail, and that men shall come into union with one another and with Him. It is to accomplish these purposes that He lives, and works, and comes to man. Let us examine some of the signs of the times by these simple tests.

All progress in every form and degree of human activity and attainment is made by means of truth. There is no exception to this law, and there can be none. The miraculous progress which has been made during the last century in bringing material forces into the service of man has been effected by science, by an accurate knowledge of the laws, qual-

ities, and relations of matter. Enlightened men have ceased to judge of material things by appearances. They look within. They decompose the crude substances of nature, and analyze them; they penetrate their secrets, and try to discover their likes and dislikes; they watch their forms and motions, to discover what they can do and how they behave when introduced to one another; what paths they love to follow; what alliances they form; what co-partnerships they reject; what conditions the Divine forces in nature demand to bear men's burdens, to do his work, to run on his errands, to be light and warmth in his dwelling, to bring the products of all climes to his door, and to be a help and comfort to him in attaining the ends of life.

This knowledge has extended through the whole realm of nature, from the smallest microscopic forms to the remote stars; from the most subtle substances to the solid crust of the earth. Man has armed his senses with the most powerful artificial aids to bring the remote near, to magnify the forms and to scrutinize the processes of nature, invisible to the naked eye. Fired with such zeal, assisted with such skill, and with the help of true methods, he has made the most surprising progress. He has extended the domain of knowledge in every direction. The universe is immensely larger to-day to the intelligent mind than it was a century ago, and the horizon is constantly extending. More truth is discovered in a lump of coal, or a grain of earth, in an insect, or the smallest plant, than was formerly known to

exist in the whole world. Every new truth discovered is used as a light to penetrate farther into the darkness of the unknown, and to form the way in which man can pass on to new fields of knowledge and new acquisitions of power.

Whence comes this miraculous awakening of the human intellect? From what source does man derive this new power? Where does he get this vast increase in the love of knowledge? It does not come by chance. It does not come from any unused reservoir of intellectual life stored up in the human mind. It does not come from the past, for the past did not possess it. It can come only from the one source of power, the Lord. He must be drawing nearer to man, and man must be coming into such orderly relations with Him that He can quicken his intellectual faculties, and inspire him with a greater desire to learn and understand the laws and methods of creation.

But there is stronger evidence than the increase of knowledge that man is operated on by new forces. He is imbued with a new spirit. He views truth in a new way. He no longer regards truths as isolated and unrelated facts. He has discovered that the universe is a cosmos, a harmony. He knows that all things are related. The universe, though composed of a countless number of particular forms and forces, is a unit. He has learned to see the whole in the part, and to judge of the part from the whole. He has learned that all nature is governed according to immutable laws, and, imbued with a true

scientific spirit, he comes with the most childlike simplicity to learn from nature, from her own lips, what those laws are, that he may obey them,—that he may put himself into such relations to her forms and forces, and come into such sympathy with her attractions and repulsions, that he can win her inmost secrets and understand her ways. There is much boastfully said about man's control over nature,—about forcing her into his service, and compelling her to do his will. But this is an entire mistake. Man has no power to change a law of nature, or to make her turn aside from her paths. He “cannot make one hair white or black” of her least important law. He must adjust himself to nature, and then she will work for him with tireless energy. He must fashion his keels to the nature of water, if he wishes his ship to float; he must adjust his sails to the wind, if he desires to have it put its shoulder to his canvas and push his vessel round the world. But it will not turn a hair from its course to please him. The stream will turn his wheels, and saw his lumber, and drive his planes, and weave his cloth if he will adjust himself to its laws, but on no other condition will it lift a finger for his help. This is an immutable law.

I have spoken of nature, but I mean the Lord. Nature has no powers of her own. The laws of nature are only the Lord's methods of working on the material plane of the creation. The forces of nature are the Lord's power working in and by material agencies. When man brings himself into

friendly relations with any Divine force, natural or spiritual, it will work for him. This is the sole, but immutable condition. The Lord will come to man with all knowledge, with all power, with all blessedness, when man will open his understanding to receive them.

The knowledge of this truth is an immense step in the right direction. It offers to man a most powerful incentive to investigate the forms and forces of the material world. The moment men see clearly that all their relations to the material world are governed by immutable law, and that there is no limit to the service the Lord will render to them through nature, if they will only put themselves in a right position to receive His aid, it becomes a most powerful incentive to discover the hiding-places of His power, and learn what he must do to gain possession of it. This puts him on the constant watch to discover the conditions on which the Lord will come to him and work for him in the realms of nature, and it fills him with hope that he may find them.

But it renders him a more important service than this, it leads him into the true position to watch for the Lord's coming in the power and glory of new spiritual truth. It teaches him that He will come, and can only come, to him as a spiritual being, according to the laws of spiritual life, and that the only way of watching for His coming is to awake from the sleep of ignorance and indifference and learn those laws which, in one form, are the paths



that lead from Him to us ; and in another, are the garment of light in which he clothes Himself. Truth is the only highway from the Lord to the soul, and the only form in which He can manifest Himself so clearly that every eye can see Him.

How has man come into this new method of learning truth ? How has he risen from regarding nature as so many isolated forms and facts, to the discovery that there is no isolation in the universe, that all things are related and connected ? How has he passed from the old, heterogeneous world in which everything was dislocated and adrift upon the ocean of chance, into the new world of order, harmony, and law ? How happens it that man has lived thousands of years in the presence of this order and environed by these awful forces, and has only, in these latter times, waked up to the consciousness that he is penetrated by immutable laws ; that he, also, is a part of this grand cosmos whose fine principles centre in him, and come with helpful power when he will open the doors to welcome them ? It must be because he has come into conditions more favorable to be acted upon by the Divine forces in nature. Some of the obstructions which obscured the mind have been removed ; the clouds of sense have parted, or they have become translucent to the light of truth. The Lord has gained a freer access to his understanding, and is quickening his heart with a new life.

This awaking of the human mind to search for truth is not confined to the material plane of

the creation, it extends to every domain of human thought and life. There has never been a time in the history of humanity when there was so much interest in all questions relating to man's spiritual nature and destiny as there is now. Men are awakening to the significance of the great fact that they are spiritual and immortal beings. The desire to know the truth concerning God and man is constantly increasing in strength and sincerity. Papers are scattered broadcast over the world thick as the leaves of autumn; pamphlets and magazines and books are published without number setting forth new theories, assaulting and defending old dogmas, and proclaiming new ones. Men are looking for the Lord. Some think they have found Him in the desert of material laws; some look to the pages of history; some gaze into the material heavens and expect to see the signs of His coming in the ruins of the material universe, forgetting that He has declared He will not come with outward show; that the kingdom of God is within us, and that it is there, and only there we can find Him. The whole mind of the Christian world is moved as never before.

The idea of law, order, and unity, which man has discovered in every province of the material world, from the least to the greatest, has led him to look for it in the spiritual realm of his being. Men are not content to take dogmas upon historic faith or personal authority. They have discovered that all natural things are related, and that these

relations are governed by immutable laws, and they pertinently ask, why the reign of law should cease when we come into the finer world of the spirit? They see that for thousands of years, even from the beginning, men have been tempted by the serpent senses to take the appearance for the reality, and they *begin*, at least, to surmise that they may have been subject to the same illusions in their conclusions concerning spiritual things. They, therefore, demand a faith concerning the nature of the Lord and His relations to men which will satisfy the reason, and which will grow brighter the more it is investigated. Consequently there is a sifting of evidence, a searching scrutiny into the grounds of belief. Men ask for the fish of spiritual science, and they cannot be content with the serpent of appearances; they ask for the bread of rational knowledge, and they will never be satisfied with the stones of isolated facts in spiritual, any more than in natural things. What is the cause of this new state of the human mind? of this quickening of every intellectual faculty? It must have a cause. Is it the perversity of human nature? That cannot be, because, at bottom, it is the love of truth. It is in the direction of all human progress, both in the individual and in the race. Can it be due to any other cause than the nearer approach of Him who "is the way, the truth, and the life," and in whose vivifying presence every human faculty is quickened with new energy? Every faculty of man's nature is becoming tender and pliant with the inflow

of new forces; it is putting forth the leaves of a new hope, and giving the promise of a new fruitfulness. We know, therefore, that the summer of a new age of spiritual knowledge and fruitfulness is near. The Lord is coming to create a new day. We are yet in the gray of the morning. The awaking from the sleep of ages, the stir which is becoming manifest, the appearance of a multitude of forms, which come out of the darkness, whose existence was unknown to us before, are the signs of His coming.

This coming of the Lord in the power and glory of new truth produces various and apparently opposite effects. Every new truth executes a judgment; it displaces the old to make room for the new. Every mechanical invention, every new application of physical force has pronounced and executed judgment upon some implement of human labor. The railroad and steamboat passed judgment upon the stage-coach, the produce wagons, and the flat-boats; the sewing-machine has condemned the needle to a most subordinate position in human industry; gas condemned the tallow dip and put out the lamp, to be relighted and to shine with greater clearness by the discovery of coal-oil; and now electricity gives promise of extinguishing the gaslight. The discovery of a new law of God in nature, a new Divine force in matter, reverses many forms of human industry, opens new fields for human effort, and adds new comforts and new joys to human life.

So it must be in the spiritual plane of life. An error can never be seen except in the light of a new truth. Darkness does not comprehend the light; but light reveals and disperses the darkness. Truth pronounces and executes judgment upon error. There is abundant and incontrovertible evidence that the so-called evangelican doctrines of Christianity are losing their hold upon the minds of honest and thinking men and women, in the special form they have been stated and accepted. The religious literature of the day shows this beyond a doubt. Many of the most far-seeing and honest minds confess it, and loudly deplore it. The doctrines of the trinity, of the atonement, of the inspiration of the Bible, of the resurrection, of the judgment, of heaven and hell, as they have been understood and taught, are passing away. Even when they are held in name, they are differently understood. The kingdom of the Church is divided against itself, and it cannot stand.

Those who believe that the Westminster Catechism, or the Thirty-nine Articles, or the faith of the Roman Catholic Church are true, and that any departure from these symbols of doctrine imperils man's salvation, cannot but regard this condition of the Church with alarm. A judgment is being executed; there are wars of opinion, and dogma, and rumors of wars; there are earthquakes in the Church, the sun of their faith is growing dark, the stars of their knowledge which have given them light are falling from their places, and the heaven

of their hope is passing away. Those who have believed that their doctrines were the ultimate possibility of human knowledge upon spiritual subjects, are filled with fear. They see that they can go no farther; they can do nothing but reiterate the old doctrines, and they see no hope for man but in an interposition by the Lord, which will sweep away all former things and make a new beginning.

These effects must have a cause. They cannot be due to an increase of iniquity, because society is constantly improving. There is this remarkable state in the Churches of every name. While their members believe less, and their ministers teach less of their distinctive doctrines, they all believe more than ever before in doing good and in living heavenly lives; and they are more active than the members of the Church have even been in relieving human necessities and ministering to human sorrow. While the Churches are doctrinally deteriorating, when measured by evangelical standards, they are practically improving. They are becoming more lax in faith and more vigorous in good works. Many of those who nominally reject the common faith are among the most active in doing good. The Lord is coming in a truer and nobler life. Men feel His quickening power before the corresponding light reaches them. They express the truth in their deeds before they can formulate it in speech and doctrine.

Time will not permit me to dwell longer upon

this part of my subject. But enough has been said, I trust, to show that there is a wide and powerful awaking of the human faculties to learn new truths upon all subjects, natural and spiritual, and this fact is sufficient evidence that He who is the true Light itself is coming nearer to man. The sun of righteousness is rising upon the world, and He is coming with healing in His wings.

Another effect of the Lord's coming is seen in the increase of human freedom. This is a necessary result, if He comes as the truth, for all freedom is gained by means of truth. The Lord's promise is, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." With every new scientific truth man discovers he gains a larger freedom. What freedom the new methods of locomotion give him to travel over the earth, to see its beauty and grandeur, to stand in the presence of old civilizations, to associate with men in all planes! Steam is the fairy wishing-hat which annihilates time and space, and brings all climes to every door. Man's physical freedom has been enlarged beyond the conception of what seemed possible a few years ago. And it is constantly extending in every direction. The telegraph and telephone enable us to speak with men who dwell at remote distances. Modern inventions give us the free use of a multitude of substances which contribute to our comfort and happiness. They give us access to the treasure in the depths of the earth. The day laborer has more freedom in many respects than the most powerful



king of a century ago could command. This is only a type of the freedom man has gained, and is gaining in all other respects. Think of the freedom of access to the minds of the wise and good of all nations and ages which the printing press gives us. We can sit in our homes and converse with the poets and philosophers, the scientists, and theologians of all ages and climes. The morning paper brings us the world's history of yesterday, and while we are eating our breakfast, we can see pass before us the panorama of human life as it was acted upon the stage of the round globe. Thus man can range over the whole world, and hold communion with many minds, before engaging in the duties of the day.

Men are also coming into a freer state of civil life. Old institutions and arbitrary restrictions are growing weaker and becoming abolished, and all men are freer to act, and to speak, and to engage in pursuits congenial to them. They are gaining the freedom to make their own laws, to choose their own rulers, impose their own taxes, and to govern themselves in all their civil relations. But this freedom is not license. It is the freedom which is acquired and maintained by law, by self-imposed law. "True freedom consists in a man's compelling himself." In the exercise of this liberty he gains more freedom and becomes more a man.

But the most important liberty is freedom to think concerning spiritual things. This freedom is of two kinds or degrees. The first, is freedom from fear

and the constraining influence of others. There has not been much of this freedom in past ages. The whole power of the Church in some of its branches—and to a great extent in all of them—has tended to suppress free thought. Men have been persecuted and afflicted, and their property has been confiscated; they have been banished from home and country; they have been imprisoned and tortured, burnt alive and threatened with everlasting torments, as penalties for daring to differ in opinion from others. Words cannot express the terror of the spiritual bondage in which men have been held. Even the mild form of servitude which still prevails to some extent, which consists in the belief that an intellectual and formal assent to certain doctrines is essential to salvation, has produced a mental paralysis which has, first, prevented thought on the most important subjects of human interest, and then, incapacitated the mind for it. Under such conditions spiritual progress is as impossible as natural progress would be, if men were not allowed to study science, to invent new methods of doing their work, or in any way to depart from the old beaten paths. Happily, man is becoming freed from this servile state of mind. The Lord is coming; and as He comes the chains of spiritual bondage fall from the mind. He encourages men to think,—to think freely,—and He helps them to do it. He guards man's freedom as the essential human principle. He gave it to man, and He will never take it from him. He desires children whose faculties have free

play in the warmth of that love which casteth out fear, and not cringing and fawning slaves. For this reason He veils his power and glory, and comes to us in a form adapted to our capacity to receive Him. If He were to come in person, in the resistless power and flaming splendors of His Divine glory, no human being could act or think in any freedom, even if he could live in His presence.

But there is another and more important kind of freedom, and far more difficult to obtain, and that is, the freedom we gain by coming into the laws of the Divine order, and thinking according to the truth. The mind has its laws and sustains relations as well as the body. It is subject to the action of spiritual forces, as the body to the action of physical forces. We know that the body is free only when it is in true order, and when its relations to the soul and to the material universe are properly adjusted. Inflame the eye, or pour too great a flood of light into it, and it has no freedom to see. Paralyze the arm and the hand has no power and no freedom to move. So mental freedom is restricted or destroyed by falsity: by getting out of the true order of its nature. The understanding was made to see truth as the eye, light. There is no difficulty in seeing natural objects when the eye is sound and the objects are in clear light. There would be no more difficulty in seeing the truth, if the understanding were not perverted and the Divine truths obscured by falsity. When the understanding comes into the order of its nature, and all its facul-

ties have free play, and move in harmony with the Divine forces which flow into them, it will be lifted up into clear light; it will be carried along in the currents of the Divine order; it will be quick to perceive, prompt to act, and powerful to comprehend. And it will gain a freedom of which we now have but the faintest conception.

We see evidences of this power and freedom in the facility with which some men gain natural knowledge. The men of science are free to think because they have the means of thinking, and can think truly; because they follow in the paths of the Divine order. The same result is beginning to be seen in spiritual things, and it will constantly increase. Man is coming into that kind of freedom which he gets from the truth. The Lord is coming as the truth; and according to the measure of the truth received, man becomes free; free to learn, free to think, free to act. He becomes free from the bondage of error, free from the illusions of the senses, free from physical restraints, free from fear, and above all, free from false methods and the misleadings of ignorant guides. Man is coming more under the influence of Divine truth, and, by means of it, the Lord will lead him in all freedom to the highest possible good.

Finally, the surest, the most striking and incontestable sign of the Lord's coming, is the new purpose and direction of human effort. In this respect there has been the most remarkable change during the last century, we may say, within the

last fifty years. There has indeed been an almost total reversal of the ends of human thought and action. Nearly all the benevolent institutions which now exist have been established during the present generation. The orphans, the insane, the imbecile, the poor, the disabled, and the infirm from sickness and age, are provided for in a way unknown to former ages. Asylums for all classes of the unfortunate are scattered over the civilized world. Human effort is rising to a higher plane. Compare the provisions now made for education with those which existed a hundred years ago. The public school and the academy are modern institutions. The methods and the means of instruction have been as greatly improved as instruction itself has been widely diffused. Besides these, there are provisions made for instruction in every special art and form of use. Books are multiplied, and the facilities for gaining useful knowledge and the stimulus for seeking it are constantly increasing.

The common employments of men are more than ever directed to lift human burdens, to multiply conveniences, to protect man from cold and heat and hunger and danger, to gratify his tastes, increase his comforts, to embellish his home and his person, and to make him happy. In the largest and most varied ways, the thought and the power of men, among the most advanced nations, is directed to human use. Even the love of self and the world see this. The most favorable and certain conditions of success in all inventions and enterprises are use-

fulness. Every intelligent man knows that he will gain money if he can invent some better and cheaper way of making a shoe or a pin, or if he can discover some new substance or force in nature which can be made available for human comfort and help. The ingenuity and intellect of the world are directed to discover better and easier methods of supplying human wants, and multiplying human conveniences and comforts; to prevent human suffering, and to ameliorate it when it exists; to devise better methods of instruction, more certain and humane methods of curing diseases; to give, not merely to the few, but to all men, a better knowledge of the world, of their own natures, physical, mental, and spiritual, and to help them to do that which wisdom teaches is the best method to secure their present and future happiness. All trades, all arts, all professions, all human industries are directed, more than ever before, to some form of human improvement and use. Humanity is alive with the purpose of perfecting its condition and increasing its happiness.

These are indubitable proofs that more potent and benign influences have become operative in the minds of men. They show that man has taken a new and higher step in natural knowledge, and, by means of it, that he has come, and is constantly advancing, into a new world of industrial, social, and civil life. In this way they demonstrate the nature of the step he must take to come into a corresponding spiritual condition. He must have the same kind of knowledge of spiritual truth that he has

gained of natural truth. He must rise above the clouds of sense; he must advance from the narrow and obscure region of faith in mysteries which cannot be understood into rational truth. He must gain a knowledge of spiritual laws, as they exist and operate in the spiritual realm of the creation, as he has gained a knowledge of natural laws as they exist and operate in the realm of matter. In this way only can he come into such relation to those forces "which make for righteousness" that they will introduce him into a new world of spiritual light and life.

This knowledge has been disclosed to men, and presented in a form accessible to all who desire it. It is contained in the Word of God, as all natural science is embodied in the works of God. The Word is not a heterogeneous collection of the writings of man, containing the ideas of Moses, David, the prophets and evangelists. The Lord is the Author of it, and it is homogeneous and connected throughout from the beginning to the end,—it is a unit. It is the repository of Divine and spiritual laws. It embodies, in the form of history and natural symbols, a full, clear, and specific revelation of the Divine nature, purposes, and methods of carrying them into effect; a precise and ordered statement of man's nature, of his relations to the Lord, and the true and certain methods of cultivating his faculties and attaining the highest good possible to him. It contains all the knowledge necessary for his guidance and help in every phase and condition



of his existence throughout his endless future. It can give him the means—and the only means—of extricating himself from the darkness and perplexities of the past and present, and of lifting him into the pure air and clear light of specific and systematized spiritual truth. The Word is a Divine Book, has a Divine Author, and it contains infinite truth. It is written in a Divine style, according to the inherent and essential relations between spiritual and natural things; and it is by a knowledge of this connection between the natural symbol and the spiritual law that the Spirit of Truth will fulfil the promise of the Lord by leading men into all truth. When the real nature of the Word is understood, man is led to the fountain of all truth, and he has gained the true position to be led *into* all truth.

But we are not merely taught the fact that the Word is the embodiment of all Divine and spiritual truth, and left to stand before its gates, or to wander without a guide through its infinite labyrinths. A perfect key to its interpretation has been given by Swedenborg and the most specific directions for its use. With this key we can unlock all its doors, and, under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, we can be led into all truth as fast as we can receive it. We are better equipped for gaining exact and related spiritual truth than the most learned scientific man for gaining a knowledge of the substances, forms, and laws of the material world. The scientist is left to himself and to fallible human guides. But in gaining spiritual knowledge man has infinite

Wisdom for his Teacher and Guide. He need have no fear of being deluded by the fallacies of the senses. He will be led into all truth concerning himself, concerning the Lord, and the path which leads to Him who is the source of life and the goal of all attainment.

Here, then, man is fully equipped with all the means necessary to his endless progress. He has the means for the creation of a New Age. He can take a new step from faith to a rational knowledge of the laws and forms of spiritual life. He passes from a world "without form, and void," in which all the elements are in commotion and wild conflict, into an Age of light, harmony, and order,—he emerges from a chaos and rises into a cosmos.

The New Age will not only be free from the defects of the one it succeeds, but it will be a grand step in advance of it in every respect. The Lord will come nearer to man, and man will rise to a higher level of life to meet the Lord. He will come more directly and fully under Divine influence. Every Divine truth is a path between man and the Lord. By means of these genuine truths broad and manifold ways will be opened between the human understanding and the source of power and life, and man's nature will be penetrated and imbued with a heavenly spirit, and his spiritual faculties will be moulded into a heavenly beauty. The Divine love will clasp its tendrils around man's affections, and, by its sweet attractions, lift him up into a purer atmosphere and clearer light. His

horizon will enlarge,—he will see farther, as well as clearer. In this light he will discover new degrees of faculties in his own nature as much superior to his natural faculties as they are more excellent than his physical powers, and with the discovery he will find the most ample means for their development.

I know there are but few who believe that such knowledge is attainable. But every step in human progress has been impossible until the way and the means to take it were discovered. But it will hardly be denied, however, that a true and rational knowledge of the laws of spiritual life is essential to any distinct step in spiritual progress and the fulfilment of the oft-repeated, and the most explicit declarations of the Lord's purposes concerning the establishment of His kingdom on the earth. It is also in perfect accord with the means by which the first Christian Age was formed, and by which every step of progress in every form of human activity has been taken. Even if the Lord were to come in person, He could only build up His kingdom on the earth by forming it in the minds of men; and this can only be done by means of the truth. We have, therefore, the clearest rational grounds for the belief that the Lord will make His Second Coming by a clearer revelation of Divine truth in His Word. The means and the method are adequate to the result.

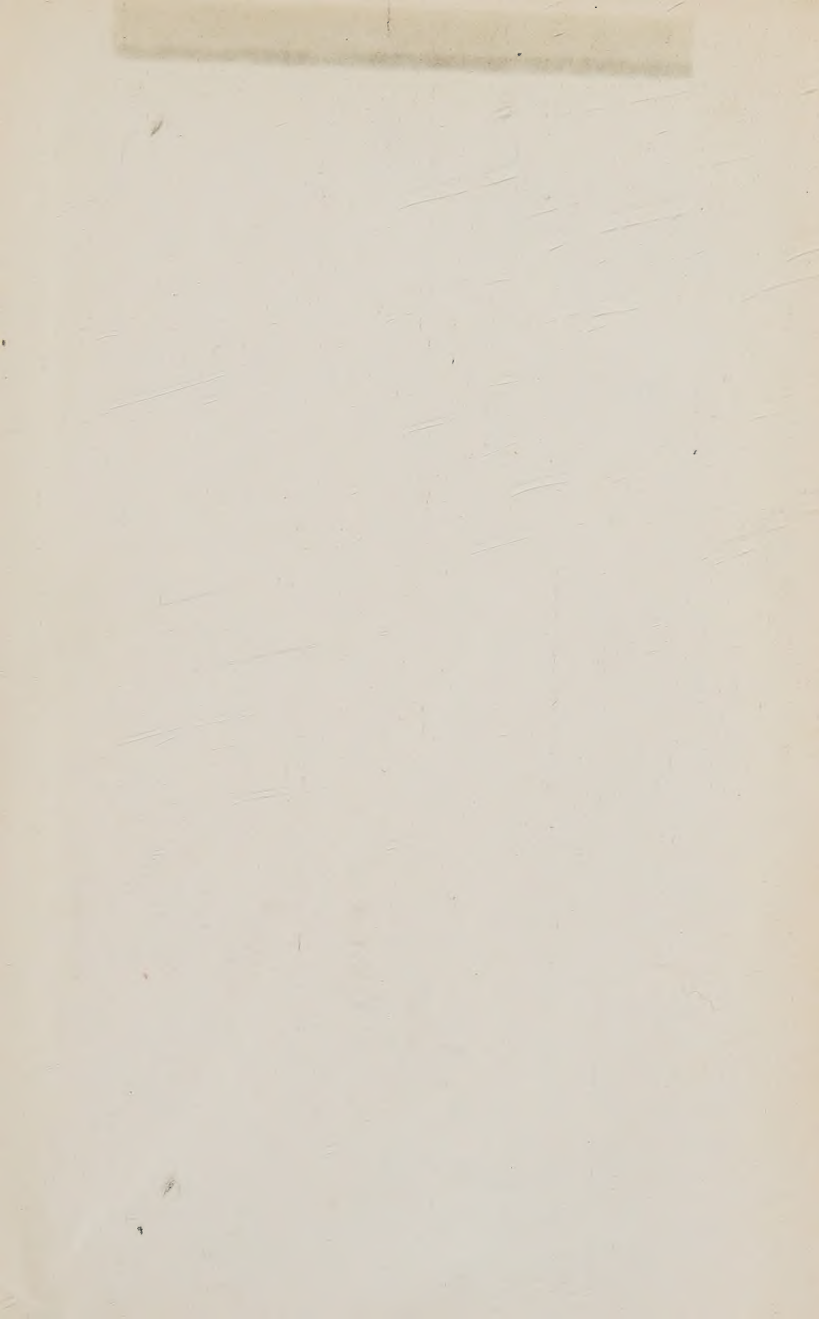
We have no reason to expect any sudden and miraculous exertion of Divine power. This is not the Lord's method of accomplishing His purposes. He will "not come to destroy the law or the prophets,

but to fulfil." He will not come to interrupt or set aside what He has done before, but to use it in carrying on His work. When the laws of progress which we see in operation in social, civil, and industrial life are carried into the spiritual plane of man's being, as there is abundant evidence that they are being done, they will have the same transforming power upon the religious life of the world that they have exerted upon the natural plane of man's activities.

Let these tendencies go on with constantly-increasing effect for a thousand years to come, as they have done during the last century, and the earth will be a very comfortable home. Society will be intelligent, pure, and lovely. Extend the time to millions of years, and this will be a new earth. The great increase in knowledge on all subjects—natural, spiritual, and Divine; the civil, intellectual, and spiritual freedom into which men have come, and are coming, and the general direction of human strength, knowledge, and purpose to human good, are clear signs that the Son of Man is coming, in the power and glory of His truth, to reign upon the earth, and to subdue all things and all minds unto Himself. They are the effects of His coming,—the fore-shining of the splendors of that sun of truth which every eye will see, and which is to dispel the darkness of human ignorance, and bring all men into the light, the freedom, the joy, and the peace of heaven. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."





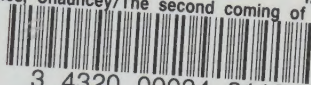




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